

Title:

Coffee-So Darn Expensive

Word Count:

648

Summary:

I always cringe when that is the first question from a restaurateur, and my response is always the same - "Is price more important than taste"?

Consider the following - restaurants usually sell a cup of coffee for about one dollar. And when they pay \$6.00 per pound for coffee, their cost per cup is about ten cents, (which means their profit is ninety cents). So the difference in their profit between \$6.00 per pound and \$3.00 per pound is the incredible sum of five cents p...

Keywords:

Coffee, Cafe, Vivo, Coffee Club, Beans, Mug, Cup, Bialetti, Brewed, Coffee Roaster, Teas, Blended Co

Article Body:

I always cringe when that is the first question from a restaurateur, and my response is always the same - "Is price more important than taste"?

Consider the following - restaurants usually sell a cup of coffee for about one dollar. And when they pay \$6.00 per pound for coffee, their cost per cup is about ten cents, (which means their profit is ninety cents). So the difference in their profit between \$6.00 per pound and \$3.00 per pound is the incredible sum of five cents per cup. However, the real difference will be in the taste of the coffee.

The taste difference is even greater with coffee brewed in an espresso machine since an espresso machine is an amplifier. It will highlight a really good coffee, but conversely, it will also amplify any faults with that coffee.

Remember, espresso is not a type of bean, but is a method of brewing coffee. Espresso coffee is tightly packed (7 grams), through which hot water (198 degrees F) is forced at high mechanical pressure (132 psi). The resultant one and a half fluid ounces is the elixir known as espresso, and many countries could be conquered before 9:00 am if their population were to be deprived of this magic "elixir"!

A commonly mistaken thought is that coffee used in espresso machines should be dark roasted - WRONG! When beans are darkly over-roasted, all the oils come to the surface giving the impression that the roasted coffee has been coated with grease. These oils contain much of the flavor of the coffee and when brought to the surface by over-roasting, they will be lost when handled, stored, and of course, when they are ground. Since coffee is really "cooked" three times, (the first during roasting; second when ground since the grinder creates heat; and thirdly when brewed), over-roasting will produce a bitter/burnt taste when brewed as an espresso.

Let me return to my original point as to why better coffee beans cost more. Coffee beans are an agrarian product, and like all crops they are subject to climate, soil, and growing and harvesting methods. Coffee plants that are treated better will produce a better crop.

Coffee harvested by hand will produce a higher quality product. A mechanical harvester only goes through once plucking ripe and unripe berries simultaneously. Manual harvesting takes place over a period of time and the pickers only pluck the ripe fruit, avoiding the unripe berries.

Sorting takes place at the plantation AND at the roaster. The better the sorting, the better the coffee. This process begins with the removal of stones (which can ruin your grinder), branches, leaves, poisonous spiders, (just joking, I think), and continues with the removal of broken, misshapen, and bad beans. This is critical since a broken or misshapen piece could roast quicker than the other beans, and will affect the quality of the finished batch.

Blending must take place after roasting. Different batches of beans from different plantations and countries will roast at different times and temperatures. Throwing different green beans together will result in some beans being under-roasted while others are burnt. Expert blending (or cupping as it is known) of roasted beans will ensure the best and most consistent flavor.

Packing the perfectly roasted and blended beans will ensure that you are sold the product in peak condition. Coffee begins to oxidize and lose its flavor and aroma as soon as the roasting process is finished. It's essential that the coffee is packed in lightproof and airtight bags that have been nitrogen flushed and/or vacuum packed. The bag should also have a unilateral valve to allow carbon dioxide to escape.

From the rambling monologue above, it's easy to see that short-cuts can be made to the coffee preparation process, but quality will only cost a few pennies more

per cup. And remember - your coffee may be the last item that your customer tastes before leaving your restaurant.