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RISTRETTO

GRIND THE BEANS

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Basically, a Ristretto is a shortened espresso.

This means that the same extraction time of an espresso (25 seconds) gives less liquid (about 15-20ml). The grind of your mill remains the same, but more coffee beans used. Some sources recommend a 1:1 ratio-i.e. 1g of ground coffee on 1ml extraction. This would be about 15-20g of ground coffee for a ristretto. The advantage of this method is, that the often tedious process of finding the right grind setting does not have to be started anew every time. You can choose beans that you would use for an espresso, such as an Arabica or Robusta bean. An Arabica bean will be sweeter with hints of berries and a higher acidity. The Robusta has a stronger, nuttier taste and contains more caffeine than the Arabica. Check out local coffee beans for new and different kinds of Arabica or Robusta beans.



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Purchase a burr grinder that grinds the beans between two abrasive surfaces. This will result in more consistent and fine grounds. If your grounds are not consistent, this may lead to some going through the filter and into your ristretto.

Grinding your coffee beans with a burr grinder is, for many, the best upgrade (short of buying better beans) for your coffee experience. Burr grinders come in many varieties and at a wide range of prices, from about \$100 up to “price is no object”. They’re also where you find all kinds of bells and whistles, from weight-based dosing to anti-static materials to titanium burrs.

When it comes to grind size, there are three factors which make the biggest difference: contact time, extraction rate and flow rate. To put it simply:

The extraction rate of coffee grounds increases with a larger surface area. To increase surface area, grind the coffee finer.

The higher the extraction rate, the less contact time is needed. A finer grind can reduce the flow rate of water, increasing the contact time.

Knowing this, if you have a brew method with a short contact time, the grind should be finer. In an immersion brewer, which steeps coffee grounds in water for several minutes, the contact time is much higher and, thus, requires a more coarse grind than most other brew methods.

If the contact time is too high or the grind is too fine, it will result in an over-extracted brew which can be bitter. If the grind is too coarse or the contact time is too short, the coffee will turn out weak.

A coarse grind is rough, and has big chunks of coffee in it. Typically, when it comes to grinders, higher number settings make for coarser grinding.

A medium grind is a little more like sand in texture and consistency, except it’s still fairly rough. Think of the classic grind you might remember from pre-ground coffee in a can or pouch. A number in the middle of the range will give you this grind in your machine.

A fine grind is like powder – it’s hard to see individual grounds and might even cake up if you press it between your fingers. The lowest numbers on grinders produce fine grinding.

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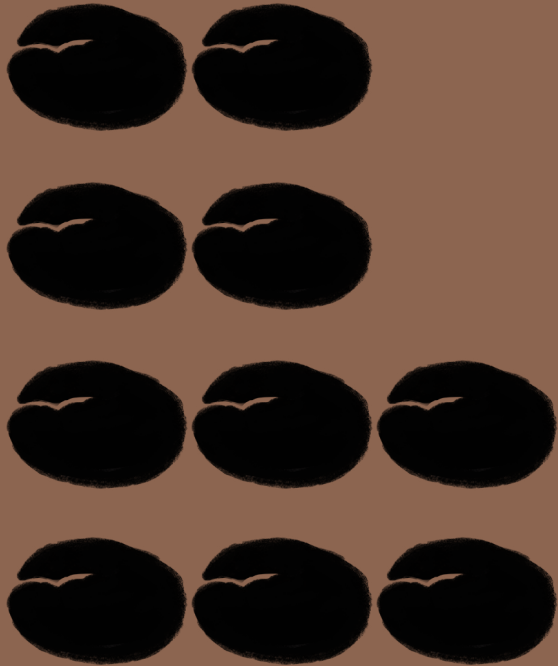


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RISTRETTO

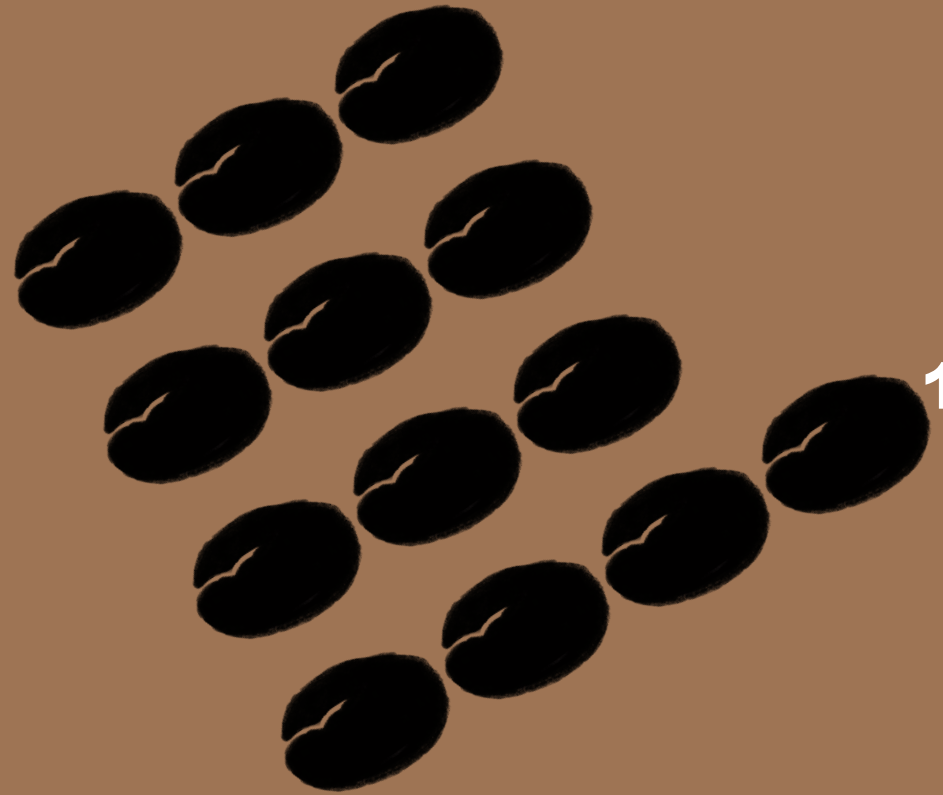
ESPRESSO MACHINE

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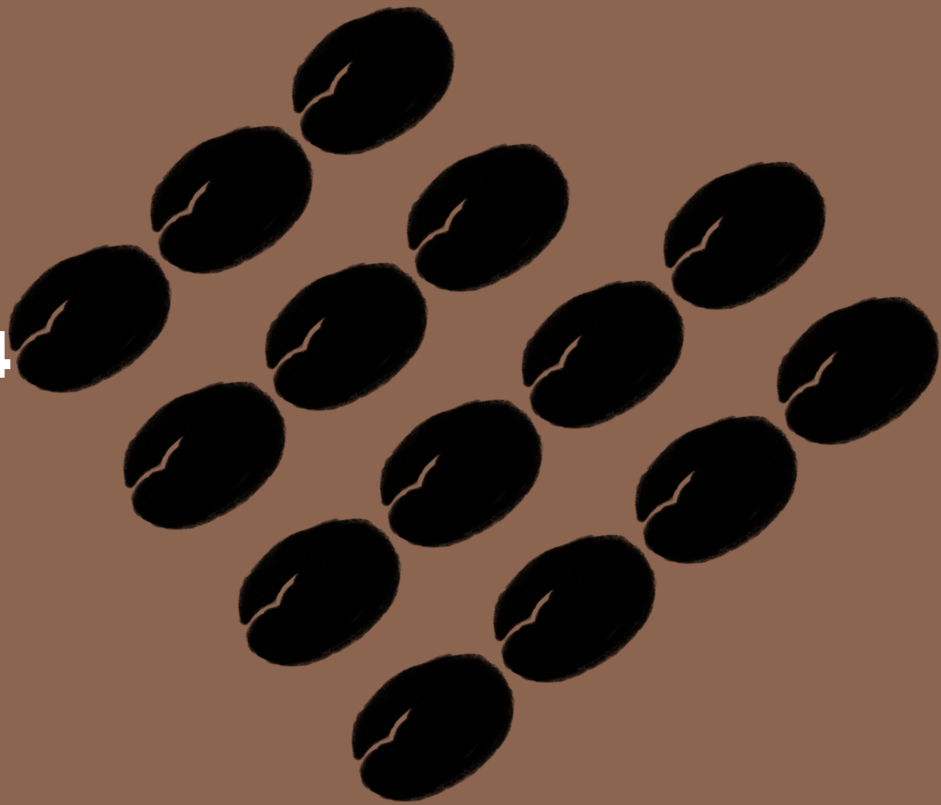


For many coffee lovers, making ristretto rivalling your favourite coffee shop without having to make a run is the dream scenario. This is certainly a great idea if you love good coffee, and with some guidance you should be able to choose the best espresso machine to meet your individual needs, desires and budget. With a good machine, some quality coffee beans, a little practice and some patience, you can soon be filling your cup with pure delight that rivals (or exceeds!) drinks from the finest cafes.

13



14



15



Please know, you don't need to spend a fortune to enjoy authentic, delicious ristretto at home. More important is the quality of the beans and coffee grinder (to ensure proper fineness & grind consistency). With that said, it's also important to know that you can't brew true espresso with the commonly found, cheap department store "espresso" machines (steam powered, no brewing pump).

OPTION 1

SEMI-AUTOMATIC

Semi-automatic espresso machines are the most common type, featuring an electric brewing pump which is manually turned on and off by the user. These machines are relatively simple to operate, but (along with lever style machines) do require the most manual intervention.

Typical Brewing Steps Using Semi-Automatic Espresso Machines:

Verify there is water in the reservoir, turn on the power, and wait until the machine is warmed up (typically just a few minutes);

Remove portafilter handle (which holds the metal filter basket);

Scoop a measured amount of ground espresso into the filter basket and tamp (press) down;

Reinstall portafilter, place brew pitcher (or cup) under the portafilter and press the brew switch;

Once the desired brew volume is achieved, turn off the brew switch;

Repeat if desired.

The above process is pretty straight forward and with a little practice you can create rich, authentic espresso as good or better than any coffee house. Some experimentation is required to achieve a perfect espresso; however, the primary variables are mostly limited to espresso bean quality, grind fineness and tamp pressure.

16

17

OPTION 2

SUPER-AUTOMATIC

18



Super-automatic espresso makers are sophisticated machines that go from bean to cup at the touch of a button. They utilize a built-in coffee grinder and brewing mechanisms that automatically grind the coffee, fill and tamp the filter basket, brew a pre-determined volume of espresso then dump the used coffee grounds into an internal waste container. Each cycle typically takes a couple of minutes to complete; at which time it can easily be repeated to brew another

These machines can also froth milk for preparing cappuccino or latte using either a steam wand or automatic milk frothing system depending on the model.

Typical Brewing Steps Using Super-Automatic Espresso Machines:

Verify there is water in the reservoir and that the coffee beans are in the grinder, turn on the power, and wait until the machine is warmed up (typically just a few minutes); Place a brew pitcher (or cup) under the brewing head; and then press a pre-programmed brew button; the machine will then grind the coffee, fill the filter basket with ground coffee and tamp it down, brew a measured volume of espresso, and then dump the used coffee grounds into an internal waste container.

19



THE CUP

CHOOSING RIGHT

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Just like how there are specifications to how their beans should be ground, ristretto also requires a certain type of cup. Most ristrettos are served in espresso cups, so make sure you have one handy. Espresso cups are usually about the size of a shot glass and are either glass or ceramic.

Some espresso cups have handles and some don't, so choose whichever kind appeals to you most. Other than personal taste though, there are other elements that can determine which type of cup that you should choose for your ristretto. In fact, connoisseurs of any drink, be it a scotch or a milk shake, will tell you their drink of choice tastes better when served in the right vessel. This is also true when it comes to coffee, obviously.

Ideally, an espresso cup should be 2-3 oz. If the cup is too big, the crema spreads out, becomes

thin, and disappears quickly. Additionally, a large cup affects the temperature of the espresso and you run the risk of it becoming cold quickly. Of course, if you regularly drink a doppio espresso, a 3.5-4 oz. cup is better.

Here is a trick if you want to keep your espresso hot – heat the cups with boiling water or put them in the microwave for a few seconds with hot water. If the porcelain is hot, the espresso will remain hot longer.

There are also certain details to consider when it comes to the shape of the cup. You want a shape that hugs the espresso. A cup that tapers at the bottom allows the crema to float on top. It also allows the aroma of the espresso to be enjoyed before the first sip. A rounded bottom, allows the liquid to swirl easily permitting you to get every last drop.

Yes there are some shapes that are interesting, for example, we have seen square espresso cups. While these may be fun and aesthetically interesting, they are not suitable or ideal for drinking espresso or ristretto.

Porcelain is king and the material of choice when choosing the iconic espresso cup. Other materials may be fashionable, but you will find that espresso served in anything, but porcelain runs the risk of going flat quickly. Also, porcelain ensures temperature is distributed evenly, which is not always the case with other materials.

In terms of the cup's rim, consider whether it is rounded or sharp, thick or thin. Espresso aficionados will tell you a thick rounded rim allows their lips to sit comfortably on the cup allowing the liquid to roll easily into their mouth.

While the exterior may be chosen based on color preference or décor, the inside of the cup must be white. Only with a pure white interior can one appreciate the caramel tones of the crema and the rich color of the espresso. It is not a coincidence that Italian cafés serve

espresso in cups that are white on the inside and outside. It may not seem like a big deal, but a handle can make you want to pick up a cup or just bypass it and pick up the cup by the body. A flat handle allows the user to be able to balance the cup comfortably in their hand. The size of the handle will either allow a finger to slip through it or not. Given the size of espresso cups, handles that are too thin feel like they are going to break when you pick them up.

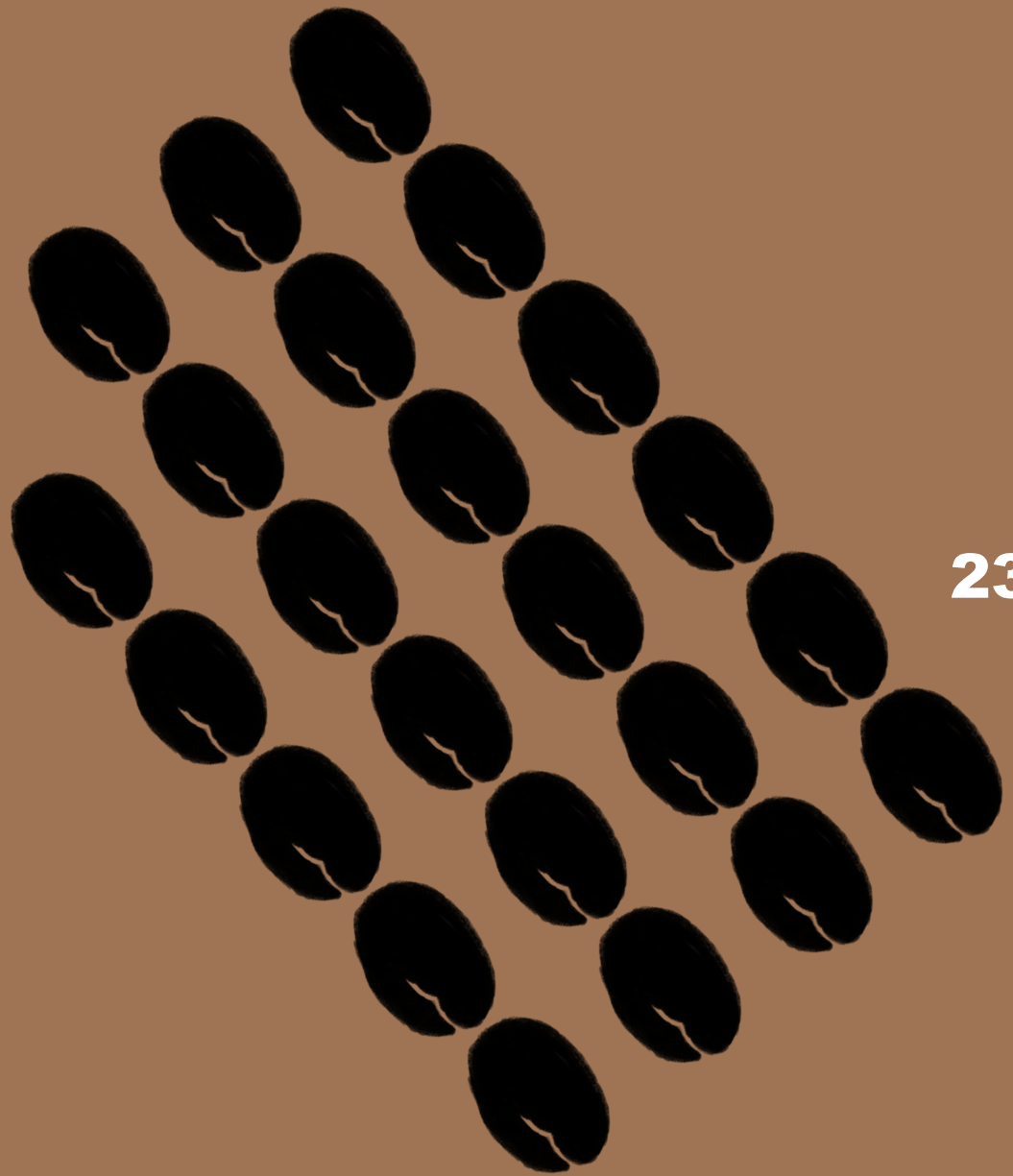
Be sure to consider the elements of size, shape, and material before you buy. Having the right cup will make your espresso experience that much more enjoyable. The other thing to consider is the cups you use when entertaining. It is understandable that you don't want to spend time washing cups when you have guests around, so consider using disposable espresso cups. Yes there are such things. Even the disposable variety take into consideration important elements like size and shape. There is nothing worse than getting an espresso in a large 8 oz cup.

21

22



23



An espresso cup is sometimes called a demitasse. Demitasse is the French word for half cup, and it holds about 2-3 fl oz. An espresso doppio normale is about two fl oz volume, and a lungo doppio can be up to 3 ounces.

With this information in mind, you can plan your purchase. If you drink doppio lungo shots, the 3 oz cup is the best cup. If you mostly drink normale shots a 2 oz cup is fine.

The most important thing for an espresso cup is thermal insulation. Espresso gets cold in seconds. Part of the reason is the lower brewing temperature; the other reason is the small volume of the coffee. With a small volume, the heat exchange is much faster. For this reason, the most important feature of an espresso cup is the insulation.

DEMITASSE

CERAMIC CUPS

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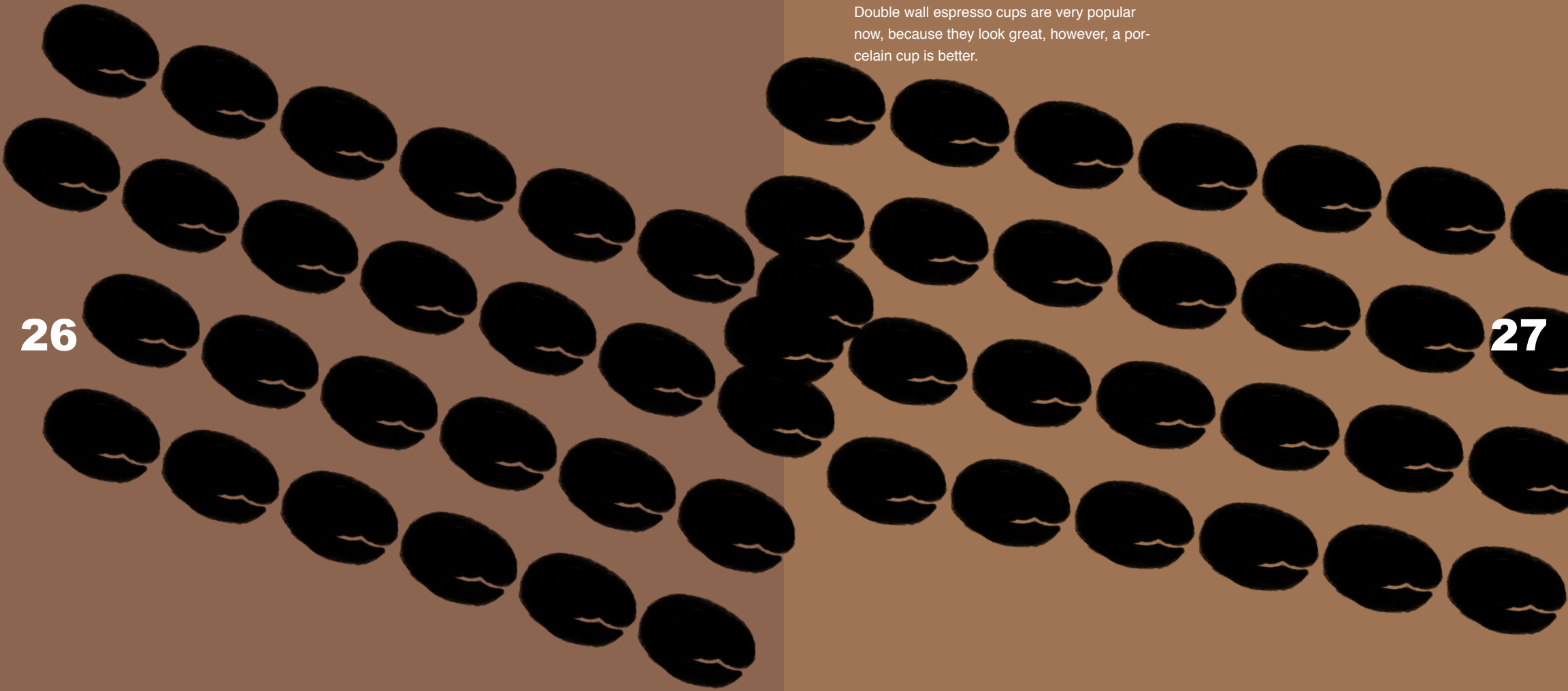
Regular glass cups are cute, but they lose temperature very fast. The best are the double wall glass cups and the ceramic ones. Yes, glass can be fine for espresso cups, if it's designed properly.

The ceramic ones can hold the espresso hot for a longer time, but they need to be preheated. To be honest, I never preheat mine. I like to drink my coffee a bit colder, so I can taste it, and understand the flavors. If coffee it's too hot, all I can taste it's burning coffee. Among ceramic materials, the best is porcelain. Porcelain retains heat the longest, but if don't prewar your cup can lower your drink's temperature consistently.

CUPS

BEST MATERIALS

As stated, there's a vary of different materials for cups. To sum it up, in terms of material, ceramics, in general, and glass are good. It is usually advised that the best is porcelain, (a ceramic material). Never use metallic, plastic or Styrofoam cups. They impart a specific taste to your coffee. Paper cups are better, if you have to. Styrene is even dangerous to your health. Double wall espresso cups are very popular now, because they look great, however, a porcelain cup is better.



PULLING THE SHOT

28

Now that you are ready with the right ground coffee beans, espresso machine, and cup, it is time to pull your shot of ristretto.

The first thing to do is to fill the espresso machine's reservoir with cold, filtered water. Of course, there are specifications for the water type. Using cold, filtered water matters! Unfiltered water won't taste good, distilled water can ruin your machine, and hard water can accumulate lime in your machine.

Let your water heat up. Turn on your espresso maker by pressing the power button and let the water heat up, which could take anywhere from

a few minutes to 45 minutes.

It isn't too hard to determine when your water has been heated up. Many espresso machines will have a light that turns from red to green to signal that the water is heated. Place 14 grams of the ground coffee in the filter. Using about 14 grams of ground coffee is the amount your espresso machine needs to produce a single cup of strong ristretto. Tamp the coffee in the filter. You should tamp, or pack down, the coffee in the filter as you would do in an espresso. Tamping will get rid of spaces between coffee grinds. In case you didn't grind your coffee very

finely, you should tamp down your coffee more firmly to allow less space between the grinds.

After tamping down the coffee into the filter, return the filter to the machine. Put the filter back into the machine by sliding it into place and then turning it towards your right to lock it into position.

Get ready to brew!

The filter isn't hidden under a cover like it is in normal coffee machines. Instead, it slides into a cylindrical mechanism in the middle of the espresso machine.

Brew for 25-30 seconds. To turn on the water flow, most espresso machines have a knob that you have to twist on. You should only pull water through the beans for 15 seconds. This will result in a less acidic and fuller taste.

29

You should end up with about 0.5oz (~15mL) of coffee. If you've done everything right, you will have a very delightful cup to enjoy! The idea of a ristretto shot is similar to the first cold pressing of olive oil, or the skimming of cream from milk. Imagine you spilled some chocolate chips onto the beach; if you scoop them up

with big handfuls you will get a lot of sand, but if you use restrained handfuls you will only get chocolate chips and no sand. Put another way, a ristretto shot contains a higher proportion of good stuff, like sweet, roasted, nutty brown flavors, and a lower proportion of the bitter, grassy and sour flavors we typically dislike.

SHORTCUTS

METHOD 2

*Get your grind as fine as possible for the machine you are using.
Tamp the filter in the usual way.
Start your extraction and let it run until you have 30mls of coffee
for a double Ristretto.*

This method of preparation is simply going to give you an espresso that has been stopped half way through - so it will not be as concentrated or syrupy as a true ristretto. If that's all your machine will allow, it's better than nothing!

30

31

This method will not necessarily result in what's traditionally considered a *true ristretto*. However, this method allows you to pull the shot on certain machines like Super-Automatics or espresso machines with pressurised filters. Typically, you will most likely not have enough control to use the more proper method. Therefore, unless you're not too strict in how authentic your ristretto needs to be, and if you only have a super-automatic, you can use this method.

SHORTCUTS

METHOD 3

32

33

Reading this booklet to this point, you are probably reconsidering your current assets for making coffee. Although it is advised to get a proper espresso machine, don't despair if you are not able to get one. Thanks to the development of homeware products, there are options. With all the new product features that many coffee makers have today, you can also enjoy a decent ristretto in a coffee machine that uses coffee capsules. As blasphemous as it may sound, some brands offer decent ristretto coffee cap-

sules. Although this book has been advocating for you to become your own ristretto connoisseur, the use of coffee capsules can allow you to enjoy ristretto without going through a learning curve.

These coffee capsules have already done the bean selection, grinding, and the machine will know how to pull it properly.

What a huge shortcut!

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