



## How to perk up your morning cup of coffee

While many brands slip cheaper beans into their blends, consumer vigilance — and new technologies — can bring you an even tastier brew

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It may appear that the differences between "commercial" coffees and "specialty" coffees have narrowed as the larger brands have introduced new flavors and offerings over the past few years. But don't be fooled — when it comes to quality and taste, the differences have become more pronounced as blended coffees increasingly use the less expensive Robusta beans, which are lower in quality.

How to beat the coffee crunch — without spending a fortune?

We decided to hit the shelves and get sipping to uncover some of the best coffees on the market and also show you how new technologies are making brewing coffee more convenient and better than ever. It's easy to go out and pay \$4 for a good cup of coffee — but you don't have to!

### Here's what to look for

Some coffee packages proudly display "100% COFFEE" on their label, which means absolutely nothing. What you really want to see is the KIND of bean used in the coffee, for example 100% Colombian (100% Arabica), which means that there is no Robusta or cheap Vietnamese beans and also very few sticks or bad beans. Also, beware of the supermarket and warehouse club packages of some of the nation's top coffee brands — often this product line is different from (and in most varieties inferior to) the coffee sold in its own stores.

### Varieties of ground coffees

There are more than 20 types of coffee plants, but only two account for the majority of commercial coffee sold worldwide: Arabica and Robusta. Robusta coffee beans constitute the majority of low-quality, mass-produced, pre-ground coffee blends and freeze-dried coffee found in jars and cans. Arabica coffee beans are the world's most flavorful: Costa Rican Tarrazu, Guatemalan Hueheutenango, Kenyan AA, Sumatra Mandheling, and Tanzanian Peaberry, to name a few. Arabica coffee beans also contain only half the caffeine of Robusta.

### Phil's picks:



#### Illy

Not only ranked as my "best of the best" coffees, but Illy also has one of the best packaging techniques, ensuring coffee drinkers top aroma and taste. Illy's patented process extracts air from the can and replaces it with high-pressure inert gasses, which also ages the coffee and improves it by causing the aroma compounds to bind with the natural oil in the beans. Their espresso "pods" make it easy to prepare perfect espresso every time. Illy coffees and espressos are served at many of the nation's most famous restaurants, including the Four Seasons, Le Cirque 2000, Nobu and Le Bernardin). Only Arabica beans are used.



#### PurJava liquid concentrate coffee

PurJava was developed to offer coffee with a great coffee taste without the bitterness and acidity of regular brewed coffee. PurJava concentrate is produced in Nebraska using a cold-water process; water is filtered and then purified and then added to a coffee concentrate. The final step is pasteurization, producing a smooth coffee with less than half the caffeine of regular brewed coffee.



### **Dunkin' Donuts**

Not only one of the best tasting coffees you can buy, but one of the best buys – the price averages \$6.99 a pound. Dunkin' Donuts blend of 100% Arabica beans is smooth and mellow. One cup and you'll wonder why Starbucks is in business.



### **7-Eleven**

All 7-Eleven coffee beans are 100% Arabica. Their Dark Mountain Roast is a premium roast coffee with beans from Columbia, Honduras and Kenya. The 7-Eleven Exclusive Blend includes prime beans from Central America and Brazil. Both blends are roasted to their specifications and are proprietary to 7-Eleven.



### **Thanksgiving Organic Coffee**

"End the Embargo" is a medium roast Arabica. Certified organic, certified Fair Trade, also Shade Grown, these coffee beans are grown in Aranjuez, Nicaragua. The beans are Marigocaturra variety, a special cross of Marigogipe and Caturra varieties, producing a low yield of extremely large beans. Light roasted so the sugars don't go beyond caramelization, making this coffee sweet and lively.



### **Green Mountain K-Cups**

The ultimate in convenience, these "K-cups" are single servings — available in 18 flavors and varieties — that brew an individual cup each time (using a Keurig coffee-making machine). The packaging keeps light, moisture and oxygen away from the coffee. Cost is about 50 cents a cup; a Keurig machine costs \$199 - \$249.



### **Boca Java**

Available only via mail order, Boca Java is hand-roasted in small batches, with a roasted on date imprinted on each bag. This "micro-brewer" is making some of the most interesting and tasty blends. Boca Sunrise, their signature blend, is a medium roast coffee of African, Central American and South American 100% Arabica beans.

### **Brewing tips**

For the best flavor, always use cold, fresh water. Bottled spring water is recommended. Do not use bottled mineral water as it will affect the taste and also cause mineral deposits in your coffee maker. Most coffee makers measure "cups" as one 6 oz. portion – use two level measuring tablespoons per each 6 oz. cup of water. Always allow the coffee maker to complete its entire brew cycle (even on those machines that allow you to take one cup during brewing – wait—it will be worth it!) to ensure that the coffee is at its desired strength.

The first coffee that passes through the filter is the most concentrated, and the coffee near the end the weakest. The proper grind of coffee is important – so read those labels carefully – and use the variety that is designed specifically for your preferred method of brewing. Generally, the faster the infusion process, the finer the ground of coffee. Drink your coffee as soon as the brewing finishes as the longer the coffee sits the more bitter it will become.

Do not leave the pot on the burner (whether it be a stove-top or coffee machine), as it will burn the coffee. Store any brewed coffee in an airtight thermos or carafe.

### **Health claims**

Reports show that consuming 24 oz or less of coffee per day can deliver a number of health benefits including the reduction of colon and bladder cancers because of the phenols contained by coffee. For asthma and allergy attack sufferers, a cup of coffee can reduce the attack. After a 10-year study by the University of Bristol, researchers discovered that a cup of coffee could help in the performance of tasks requiring sustained attention. It further helped enhance a person's ability to perform these tasks at times when they were less alert such as after lunch, at night or when sick with a cold.

*Note on decaffeinated coffees:* Coffee is decaffeinated in its green state, before roasting. There are two processes: Traditional/European and Swiss-Water, which uses no solvents whatsoever in their processing. While it may seem that this method would be the healthiest – the truth is that due to the high temperature during processing, virtually all solvents evaporate. My recommendation is to buy the decaf coffee that tastes the best to you regardless of process.

### **Storage tips**

Air is coffee's biggest enemy, and if left exposed after roasting, coffee gets stale after just 9 days.

Ground and instant: Store in the refrigerator with the lid tightly closed. Do NOT store ground coffee in the freezer, doing so will diminish the coffee's flavor. Unopened cans can be stored for up to 2 years, opened up to 1 month.

### **Food safety warning**

It is important to rinse both the brew basket and the coffee pot with warm water immediately after use. Coffee left in the paper or mesh filter will grow bacteria and mold within a couple of days.