

CHAPTER 2

Café vs. home preparation

Home espresso machines have expanded in popularity with the general rise of interest in espresso. Today, an ample range of home espresso equipment can be found in kitchen and appliance stores, online dealers, and department stores. The first espresso machine for home use was the Gaggia Gilda.^[17] Soon afterwards, analogous machines such as the Faema Faemina, FE-AR La Peppina and VAM Caravel followed suit in similar form factor and operational principles.^[18] These machines still have a small but dedicated percentage of fans. Until the advent of the first small electrical pump-based espresso machines such as the Gaggia Baby and Quickmill 810, home espresso machines were not extensively adopted. In recent years, the increased availability of advantageous counter-top fully automatic home espresso makers and pod-based espresso serving systems has increased the volume of espresso consumed at home. The popularity of home espresso making parallels the increment of home coffee roasting. Some amateurs pursue both home roasting coffee and making espresso.

Etymology and spelling

Although some Anglo-American dictionaries easily refer to "pressed-out",^[19] "espresso", much like the English word "express", conveys the senses of "just for you" and "quickly", which can be related to the technique of espresso preparation.

The words express, expres and espresso each have different meanings in English, French and Italian. The first meaning is to do with the idea of "expressing" or squeezing the flavour from the coffee using the compression of the steam. The second meaning is to do with speed, as in a train. Lastly there is the notion of doing something "expressly" for a person ... The first Bezzera and Pavoni espresso machines in 1906 took 45 seconds to prepare a cup of coffee, one at a time, expressly for you.^[20]

Modern espresso, using hot water under pressure, as pioneered by Gaggia in the 1940s, was originally defined *crema caffè*, in English "cream coffee", as can be seen on old Gaggia machines, due to the *crema*.^[21] This word is no longer used, though *crema caffè* and variants (*caffè crema*, *café crema*) find occasional use in branding.

Variant spelling

There is a controversy over whether the spelling *expresso* is erroneous or whether it is an acceptable variant. It is called a less common variant in some sources.^[22] Italy uses the word *espresso*, substituting s for most x letters in Latin-root words; x is not considered part of the standard Italian alphabet. Italian people usually refer to it simply as *caffè* (coffee), *espresso* being the ordinary coffee to order; in Spain, while *café expreso* is seen as the more "formal" denomination, *café solo* (alone, without milk) is the common way to ask for it when at an espresso bar. Some sources state that *expresso* is an erroneous spelling, including Garner's *Modern American Usage*.^[23]

While the 'expresso' spelling is accepted as mainstream usage in some American dictionaries,^{[24][25]} some cooking websites call the 'x' variant illegitimate.^{[26][27][28][29]} Oxford Dictionaries online declares "The spelling 'expresso' is not used in the original Italian and is strictly erroneous, although it is common."^[30] The Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster call it a variant spelling.^{[23][31]} The Online Etymology Dictionary calls "expresso" a variant

of "espresso."^[32] The Oxford Dictionary of American Usage and Style (2000) specifies the spelling espresso as "wrong", and describes espresso as the only correct form.^[33] The third edition of Fowler's Modern English Usage, published by the Oxford University Press in 1996, noted that the form espresso "has entirely driven out the variant expresso (which was probably invented under the impression that it meant 'fast, express')."^[34]

Shot variables

The most important variables in a shot of espresso are the "size" and "length".^{[35][36]} This terminology is standardized, but the precise sizes and proportions vary considerably.

Cafés may have a standardized shot (size and length), such as "triple ristretto",^[36] only varying the number of shots in espresso-based drinks such as lattes, but not changing the extraction – changing between a double and a triple requires changing the filter basket size, while changing between ristretto, normale, and lungo may necessitate changing the grind, which is less easily accommodated in a busy café, as fine tweaking of the grind is a central aspect to consistent quality espresso-making.

Size

The size can be a single, double, or triple, using a proportional quantity of ground coffee, roughly 7, 14, and 21 grams; correspondingly sized filter baskets are used. The Italian multiplier word doppio is often used for a double, with solo and triplo being more rarely used for singles and triples. The single shot is the traditional shot size, being the maximum that could without difficulty be pulled on a lever machine.

Single baskets are sharply tapered or stepped down in diameter to offer comparable depth to the double baskets and, therefore, comparable resistance to water pressure. Most double baskets are softly tapered (the "Faema model"), while others, such as the La Marzocco, have straight sides. Triple baskets are usually straight-sided.

Portafilters will often come with two spouts, normally closely spaced, and a double-size basket – each spout can optionally dispense into a different cup, yielding two solo-size (but doppio-brewed) shots, or into a single cup (hence the close spacing). True solo shots are infrequent, with a single shot in a café usually being half of a doppio shot.

In espresso-based drinks in America, especially larger milk-based drinks, a drink with three or four shots of espresso will be called a "triple" or "quad", respectively.