

Coffee Terminology

Written by Jason Haeger

We at BaristaGuide.com are pleased to be able to introduce this wonderful coffee terminology guide written by [Jason Haeger](#), a coffee professional working to bring quality coffee to Lubbock, Texas. A transplant from AZ, he is in a unique position to draw a comparison between the similarities of the growing coffee scene between TX and AZ.

He contributed this article:

Coffee Terminology

The Specialty Coffee Industry is full of lots of jargon that isn't normally used by the general population of consumers. I understand how confusing it can be. I remember when I first began asking about the differences between a latte and a cappuccino. I didn't have a clue and, it seemed, that neither did anyone else.

Here is a list of different terms and terminology and their definitions in layman's terms. If anything needs to be added, or if there are any questions I have not addressed, please feel free to leave a comment and I will add to the list as necessary.

I hope this proves to be a helpful guide.



Beverages

Americano: Espresso diluted with hot water to roughly the consistency of drip coffee. Similar to drip, but with more complexity, and the benefits of the espresso's crema.

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Cappuccino: 1/3 Espresso (2oz.) 1/3 Milk (2oz.) 1/3 soft microfoam (2oz.) This drink is always free-poured, and never spooned. If your coffee house spoons their foam, find a new shop. Sometimes topped with Cinnamon or Chocolate powder, but left alone for the purists.

Chai: A spiced Indian tea beverage with varying ingredients, but usually including ginger, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, sugar, milk, and, of course, Tea. There are many variations of this list of ingredients, but most will contain at least this, if not anise or fennel, or maybe even black peppercorns. Pronounced “CHigh”

Cuppa: Short for “cup-of-coffee”

Cappa: (or Cappu) Short for “cappuccino”.

Espresso: A ~1oz (single) or ~2oz (double) beverage created by a high pressure extraction at ~9bar pressure from ~8 (single) or ~15 grams (double) of fine, evenly ground coffee, evenly distributed and compacted into what is known as a puck. The Espresso has three major parts to its anatomy. The Crema, the Body, and the Heart. If your coffee house’s espresso lacks Crema, it’s time to find a new shop.

Flat White: Usually ~6oz. In all. Similar to a cappuccino, but with latte proportions of foam.

Frappe: Common terminology for an iced, blended beverage. Often containing coffee. Starbucks has a well-known rendition of their own known as a Frappuccino Blended Coffee (or Frappuccino Blended Crème, depending on the recipe)

Iced Coffee: Just like it sounds. Coffee, cold, and on the rocks.

Latte: A little bit of espresso and a lot of milk, with a thin cap of foam. Generally anything 10oz. And up. Flavorings may be added to form flavored lattes. (i.e.- vanilla latte, hazelnut latte, etc..). Milk may be substituted with Soy milk for a Soy Latte. A latte made with nonfat (or

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skim) milk is often known as a Skinny Latte.

Latte Macchiato: A latte made by pouring the espresso in last, on top of the milk and foam.

Macchiato: Macchiato is an Italian word meaning “to mark” or “to stain”. A Macchiato is a single or double shot of espresso, marked with a bit of foam or frothed milk, usually with close to equal portions espresso and foam or frothed milk.

Mocha: Named for the drink made popular by Portuguese traders at the port of Mocha, it's a drink made with chocolate, espresso, steamed (sometimes frothed) milk, and topped with whipped cream.

Processing and Roasting

Coffee Cherry: Coffee beans are actually coffee seeds that make up the pit of a coffee cherry. Coffee cherries are picked when they are ripe, and bright red in color. The pulp and mucus is removed, most of the time mechanically, and the coffee seeds are then either set out to dry (natural dry process), or sent to a fermentation tank where the coffee seeds are set in water, and allowed to ferment for anywhere from ~.5day or 1.5days, removing the mucilage from the seed. The coffee seeds are often sorted out by density (higher density being higher quality) at this time, as higher density coffee seeds will sink.

Coffee Processing: See Coffee Cherry

Cooling tray: The cooling tray is usually circular, and equipped with stirring arms that agitate the just-out-of-the-roaster coffee with air being pulled through the tray (and through the mass of freshly roasted beans) to halt the roast by bringing the temperature of the beans down from over 400F down to room temperature. Without forced cooling, the beans would continue to roast beyond the intended rate.

Degas: The time needed for a batch of coffee to release Carbon Dioxide for optimum flavor. More degassing is necessary for optimum espresso than is needed for brewed coffee.

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Green Coffee: The coffee seed before it is roasted, and after it is processed and dried. This is the form coffee is in when it is purchased by a roasting company.

Roast Profile: The rate, timing, temperature, and homogeneity of roast rate at various layers of the bean (external and internal). Roast profiling is critical for allowing the coffee's own characteristics to be highlighted as well as for blending different coffees to be used as espresso, or as brewed coffee.

Tryer: On a drum roaster, the tryer is the tool used to collect a sample of coffee to be observed by the roastmaster during roasting in order to track the profile and progress of the roast.

Light Roast: No oil, usually cinnamon, or a little darker in color. Lighter body, more flavor of origin and acidity comes through.

Medium Roast: Very little to no oil present. Milk chocolate in color, has added depth of body at the cost of some acidity, and possibly at the cost of some origin characteristics.

Dark Roast: Dark, almost black, with ample amounts of oil present on the surface. Almost, or all origin characteristics are gone, the body is beginning to decrease, the flavor is thin, and usually tastes of the roast, including charcoal, bitter flavors, and very low acidity.

First Crack: A roasting term. The coffee bean's first expansion as vaporized moisture escapes. The coffee bean expands to nearly double its volumetric size, and a popping sound almost like popping popcorn can be heard.

Second Crack: The coffee bean's second expansion as vaporized moisture is released, and the bean structure itself begins to fracture. Many of the flavors of origin are burned off during second crack, while body is increased, and acidity becomes more muted, or possibly lacking entirely. A noise sounding much like rice cereal in milk can be heard as the second crack develops.

Roast levels

American: Not a very commonly used term, but should you ever come across it, you'll know what it is. The coffee bean is cinnamon in color (and will often bear the name of Cinnamon Roast). The bean is slightly lighter in color, with an underdeveloped flavor, and very little body.

City: The roast is stopped right at the end of First Crack. Lighter body, highlighted acidity, and many origin characteristics remain.

City+: The roast is taken beyond First Crack, but is cooled before reaching Second Crack. The bean has lightly more body, slightly less acidity, with still many origin characteristics remaining.

Full City: The roast is taken to the verge of Second Crack. Body begins to increase at the cost of acidity, and origin flavors begin to become diminished, and a sweetness is introduced thanks to caramelization of sugars.

Full City+: The roast is taken just into Second Crack. Acidity and origin flavor are decreasing as body and sweetness are increasing. This stage of roast is very popular for Northern Italian Espresso.

Vienna: (also known as Continental, or Light French). The roast is taken well into Second Crack, and the beans may begin to be coated in a very thin layer of oil. (Oil will increase over time as the beans rest and degas) Origin characteristics become dominated by Roast flavors, while body increases. Also very popular for Espresso close to the Northern Italian tradition.

French Roast: (also known as Italian roast) The roast is taken towards the end of Second Crack. Flavor is diminished, body is thinned, and a charcoal flavor dominates. Unfortunately, this is typical of American espresso and most of our population's perspective of what is considered to be gourmet.

Agtron System (Roast Level Indicator). This is an important tool adopted by the SCAA and coffee professionals alike. Its value is in creating a “standard” that is uniform across the board and not open to differing interpretations of terms such as “city – full city,” etc. There is a push by true “Specialty” coffee professionals to move the industry towards this standardization. For an overview of Agtron, follow this link: http://www.coffeereview.com/interpret_coffee.cfm

Brewing

(See [“Coffee Brewing Basics”](#) by Larry Jones)

Drip Coffee: What most American’s drink every morning. Ground coffee is contained in a coffee filter inside a Filter basket while hot water is trickled on top of the ground coffee. Gravity pulls the brewed coffee through the filter, and into a carafe for enjoyment. Most home drip coffee brewers never reach a high enough temperature for proper extraction.

French Press: Popular in England and with coffee aficionados everywhere. Coarse ground coffee is placed in a pre-heated glass cylinder and hot water just off the boil is added. The mixture is stirred, and the lid and Plunger assembly is placed on top to contain heat while the coffee and water are allowed to steep. When all of the good properties of coffee are extracted, the plunger is pressed downward through the liquid, and a fine-mesh screen catches all of the coffee grounds and forces them to the bottom of the cylinder while the freshly brewed coffee remains above. Ex: [Bodum Chambord](#)

Vacuum Brewer: Prized by their owners, this brewing system extracts all of the complex flavors and oils associated with a French Press, but with less sediment and a cleaner flavor. This is the preferred method of most coffee fanatics. A Vacuum Brewer is Comprised of an upper chamber, a lower chamber, a siphon tube, and sometimes a spirits or electric burner. The lower chamber is filled with water, and allowed to heat up. Ground coffee is placed in the upper chamber (which contains the filter, and siphon tube), which is then placed directly on top of the lower chamber with the siphon tube nearly touching the bottom of the container. The hot water becomes pressurized, and is forced up the siphon tube, and into the upper chamber where brewing is commenced. When the coffee has brewed long enough, the entire unit is removed from the heat, and the lower chamber begins to cool. As the lower chamber cools, the brewed coffee in the upper chamber is pulled down back into the lower chamber, halting the extraction. Once the lower chamber is full, and the upper chamber contains nothing but

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spent grounds, the upper chamber is removed, and the lower chamber doubles as a serving carafe. Ex: [Bodum Santos](#) (non-electric)

Siphon Brewer: See Vacuum Brewer (also known as Vacuum Pot, or Vac-Pot)

Pour-over: Similar to Drip Brewer, but the entire process is manually operated. Nearly boiling water is poured over ground coffee residing in a filter in a plastic or ceramic filter-holder that will generally rest on the ridge of a coffee cup, or can be used in conjunction with a carafe. The mixture should be stirred for optimum extraction. Ex: [Melitta Pour-over System](#)

Filterbasket: In a drip brewing system, the basket in which a filter is placed, and where ground coffee is held and the brewing process takes place.

Permanent Filter: (Also known as Swiss Gold™, or Gold filter) This is a filter used in place of a paper filter, and is re-usable. A permanent filter allows more coffee oils to come through into the cup.

Extraction: The brewing process is known as Extraction. Coffee solubles are extracted from the ground coffee and into the water. This process is what creates the beverage known as coffee. Too little extraction will yield a sour-tasting cup, while an over-extraction will result in a bitter brew.

Moka: (Also known as Stove Top Espresso) While this is not espresso, it is a strong cup of coffee. There is an upper and lower chamber. The lower chamber is filled with water. Between the two chambers, is a filterbasket. To this basket is added ground coffee, that is compacted by hand. There is a top with a vertical tube to this particular filterbasket, which is then added, and the upper chamber is screwed in place on top of the lower chamber. The metal unit as a whole is then placed on a burner, be it electric, gas, or even a wood fire. As the water in the lower chamber heats, pressure is generated. This pressure forces the hot water and steam through the coffee that is serving as the ceiling of this pressure chamber, and up the tube affixed to the lid of the filterbasket. The strong coffee is then dispensed into the upper chamber, where it is collected. Steam Espresso Machines work on the exact same principles, and should not be called Espresso Machines at all. This is the classic traditional coffee found in most Italian homes.

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Bloom: The foam found on top of brewing coffee formed by escaping carbon dioxide and coffee oils is known as bloom. Bloom is only found when using freshly roasted coffee. Coffee should not be used past 2-2.5 weeks of roasting, as the coffee has degenerated, and has become stale.

Espresso

Espresso: Straight from Italy, this is a beverage comprised of a little water, and the essence of what makes coffee what it is. Coffee's very soul in roughly ~2oz (volumetric) of liquid pleasure. A portafilter contains a filterbasket which is filled with finely fresh-ground coffee (usually a blend, though not always) which is then distributed so an even density of coffee is achieved in the filterbasket. This coffee "puck" is then tamped by hand with a tamper at ~30-40lbs of vertical pressure, and polished at the end. The portafilter is then locked into the group-head on the espresso machine, and the pump is activated. Heated water at ~200F is pumped through a shower screen to ensure even distribution of water on the bed of coffee, which swells upon contact with the water. The compacted puck of coffee provides resistance to the water, which reaches ~9bar of pressure before thick honey-like liquid begins to pour from the spouts of the portafilter and into the espresso receptacle. The liquid will pour from ~20-30 seconds, the timing dependent on the resistance provided by the coffee puck. The finished product is what we know as espresso.

Portafilter: The handle with a filterbasket inserted in the non-handled end often seen in the hands of a barista either preparing an espresso, or knocking out a spent puck.

Filterbasket: A metal, cylindrically shaped container with a perforated floor in which ground coffee is placed, distributed, and tamped.

Crema: This is what makes Espresso so special. Though it is not 100% understood what exactly crema is, it is known to be a foam created by carbon dioxide contained in emulsified oils, both of which have been forced out of the bean by the high pressure water during extraction. This is part of the anatomy of espresso, and is the sweetest, most flavorful part of the experience. If there is no crema, there is no espresso, and you would do well to find either another barista, or another establishment.

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Body: This is the liquid portion and mouthfeel, or texture-like weight of the drink on the palate.

Heart: This is the complex flavor found in the espresso. This is the heart and soul of the coffee.

Naked Portafilter: This is a portafilter with the spouts removed, and the bottom cut out of it, so that the bottom of the filterbasket is exposed, and in plain sight. This enables the barista to watch as the espresso shot progresses, and to check for errors in technique. Ex: [A naked espresso extraction on my home machine.](#)

“Golden Rule”: The “golden rule”, as it were, is the rule of ~2oz. of liquid in ~25-30 seconds for an espresso extraction.

God Shot: A shot of espresso that is so good, and inexplicable, that it is believed to be blessed by God. Whether or not God has anything to do with it is debatable.

Moka: Faux espresso. See Moka in the Brewing section.

Stovetop Espresso: See Moka

Camping espresso: Made just like Moka, but with the upper chamber removed, the vertical spout turned to face downwards, and a place to set the cup is in place under the curved spout. Not real espresso, but great strong coffee if done right.

Tamper: A cylindrical shaped tool, usually aluminum or steel, used to compact the coffee into a puck. Ex: [EspressoCraft tamper](#)

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Doser: The chamber affixed to the front of a grinder where ground coffee is collected into the dosing chamber. Inside this chamber, are vanes that regulate volumetric amounts of coffee into sections. Each pull of the dosing lever dispenses a certain volume of ground coffee directly into the portafilter. Championship and great baristas never use the “dosing” feature of the doser, as it requires more ground coffee than can be used in one double shot of espresso to work correctly, and since espresso is made by grinding per shot, the doser is relatively useless. It does, however, help to relieve clumping of the ground coffee before it falls into the filterbasket.

Doserless: A type of grinder that is not equipped with a doser. Considered by many home enthusiasts to be better based on freshness alone.

Hopper: The container on top of the grinder that holds whole-bean coffee waiting to be ground.

Demitasse: Literally a French word meaning “half cup”, the demitasse is a (usually) 3oz. (volumetric) cup used for Espresso and Macchiato.

Spouts: The two (or one) spouts on the bottom side of a portafilter used to dispense the extracted espresso into a demitasse or other receptacle.

Boiler: The metal (often brass) container in an espresso machine that’s purpose is to hold, and heat water to either brewing or steaming temperature, depending on the design of the machine.

Steam Wand: The arm on an espresso machine that is used to heat and froth milk. Pressurized steam is released from the steam boiler through the steam wand, and through the nozzle on the end, and into the milk, which is frothed by the introduction of air made possible by the technique of the barista. A skilled barista can create beautifully sweet, beautifully textured microfoam.

Latte Art: Art on top of milk drinks such as Latte, Macchiato, cappuccino, and more. The

ever-popular rosetta is common, as are hearts, and other designs created by Etching. Ex: [A rosetta poured in a hot chocolate](#)

Industry Politics and Environment

Fair Trade: A concept by Transfair to pay coffee farmers a fair price for their product in order to support the farmers and enable them to keep doing what they do best. Unfortunately, it's not as clean & whistle as that. In order to be a certified Fair Trade coffee producer, a coffee farmer must be a part of a Cooperative. This means that coffees from different local farms are collected into a single lot. While this does provide for better payment to the farmers, this does have a hindrance on quality and farmers who are unable to be a part of a Coop. Becoming licensed is also expensive and takes up to 7 years (if memory serves correctly) to become licensed. It leaves the independent farmers out of the deal. There are other programs in the works that are trying to solve this problem, and take the place of Fair Trade for industry professionals.

Transfair: The organization that owns the Fair Trade label in the United States.

Sustainable Harvest International: This is a group set out to create sustainable markets for coffee on economic, environmental, and social levels.

Bird Friendly: This is coffee that is grown amongst native plants and trees. Bird Friendly coffee is often called Shade-Grown. Rainforests and coffee plantations are at odds with each other, especially in Brazil. The Bird Friendly label is an effort to help correct this problem while keeping the coffee farmers in business. Shade-Grown coffee is also known to be high in quality for flavor.

Certified Organic: Coffee is considered Certified Organic if the coffee is farmed with natural renewable resources, as well as water and soil conservation. While this is a great thing, it takes 3 years for a farm to become certified organic. This process is also rather expensive. The irony is found in the fact that if a farm is too poor to become Certified, it's probably also not able to afford the chemicals that would make the product NOT Organic. Again, there are other efforts in place trying to do something about this for professionals in the industry. Just remember that just because a coffee is not "certified organic" does not automatically mean that

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it's not organic. In fact, in most of the poorer regions of the world, it is.

SCAA: Specialty Coffee Association of America. This is the industry Association for north America. The SCAA is responsible for the United States Barista Competition (USBC), and is responsible in part with the SCAE(Europe) for the World Barista Competition (WBC). The SCAA is also the parent organization for institutions like the Barista Guild of America, and the Roasters Guild. The SCAA is in place to help standardize terms and practices in the industry.

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