

To make excellent coffee using the drip process, one must be methodical about the process and mindful of the variables: fresh beans, correct grind, proper coffee to water ratio, optimum water temperature and brew time. And of course, cleanliness is imperative. Perform routine maintenance to keep the chakras aligned in your equipment.

FRESH BEANS

For the best results, schedule your coffee orders so that you use it all within 7 to 10 days. We roast the best possible beans the day before the order ships, but coffee only remains truly fresh for 7-10 days after the roast date. It does not "go bad," but it will lose much of the flavor that allows you to distinguish one varietal from another.

If you cannot use the beans within that time, put the beans in the freezer. This is the best way to keep coffee fresh longest. We recommend that you freeze only the coffee that you want to store for more than one week. When you are ready to use the frozen beans, remove them from the freezer, and don't put them back. Rotating beans from freezing to room temperature and back will cause water to condense on the surface of the beans, affecting everything from the grind to the flavor.

CORRECT GRIND

One of the most important variables in brewing coffee is grinding: coffee should be freshly ground, and at the proper setting, minutes, if not seconds, before brewing. As we said before, coffee begins to go stale as soon as it has been roasted. Imagine how much air is reaching the expanded surface area of ground coffee, as compared to the whole bean!

The grind setting for your brew will vary with the type of grinder you have, and the kind of brewing equipment that you use. Commercial grinders are generally designed so that the drip brew setting is somewhere in the middle of the range. However, a short brew cycle will require a finer grind, and a long brew cycle will require a coarser grind. The grind should be much coarser than sand, and finer than large chunks.

We can't stress enough how important grinding beans yourself is to brewing great coffee. You will get the best results if you keep it in whole bean form until you are about to brew.

COFFEE to WATER RATIO

The proper ratio of coffee to water is 7.25 grams per 5 ounces of water or about one heaping tablespoon per 5 ounces. Before you can determine how much coffee to use, you have to know how much water your brewer uses each cycle. Run a brew cycle without coffee in the filter, and measure the resulting hot water.

Once you know how much water your brewer uses, you can calculate the amount of coffee needed to get the

right ratio. We use a digital scale in our café to weigh the ground coffee before brewing each pot.

In a retail environment, with many different people taking turns brewing the coffee, controlling the coffee to water ratio is difficult. If you don't use a digital scale to measure the coffee each time, make sure that your staff always use the same container that holds exactly the right amount of coffee for your brewer.

WATER TEMPERATURE

Coffee should be brewed at between 195 and 200 degrees Fahrenheit. This is controlled by a thermostat inside your brewer. This is hard to measure accurately, so it may be easier to go by taste. If brewed too hot, it will lose any varietal characteristics and taste somewhat bitter. If brewed too cool, it will taste slightly sour. If you have a technician who works on your coffee equipment, he or she should be able to make any adjustments to temperature.

BREWING TIME

The optimum brewing time is about four minutes. This is generally set inside the brewer by an automatic timer which only your technician will be able to adjust.