

[Image of Coffee Mug]

But First:

A Fake Report on Coffee

Oklahoma ABLE Tech



[Insert TOC]



What is Coffee, Anyway?

We all know it. We all love it. But what exactly is coffee? Just some sort of hot bean water? Or the nectar of the gods?

Wikipedia defines coffee as, “a brewed drink prepared from roasted coffee beans, the seeds of berries from certain flowering plants in the *Coffea* genus. From the coffee fruit, the seeds are separated to produce a stable, raw product: unroasted green coffee. The seeds are then roasted, a process which transforms them into a consumable product: roasted coffee, which is ground into fine particles that are typically steeped in hot water before being filtered out, producing a cup of coffee.”

The word “typically” stands out to me here. Like, who is out there just eating raw coffee grounds? Strange. Let’s continue our coffee origins journey at the logical place, the beginning.

Coffee’s Superhero Origin Story

According to the [Link: National Coffee Association USA's History of Coffee, <https://www.ncausa.org/About-Coffee/History-of-Coffee>], “no one knows exactly how or when coffee was discovered, though there are many legends about its origin.”

These Goats aren’t Fainting Anymore

Legend has that an Ethiopian goat herder named Kaldi noticed that his goats became so energetic that they couldn’t sleep after eating berries from a particular tree.

[Image of Screaming Goat]

He shared this discovery with a local group of monks who brewed the berries into a drink. This drink kept the monks awake and allowed them to pray all night.

From there, the news of this miracle drink spread east, eventually making it to the Arabian Peninsula.

Schools of the Wise Guys

Coffee really took off once it hit the Arabian Peninsula. The climate was perfect for cultivating the beans and the location was a center of worldwide trade at the time.

A precursor to the modern coffee shop full of millennials (from a different millennium, of course), coffee was enjoyed by many people in public coffee houses called qahveh khaneh. These coffee houses became known as “Schools of the Wise” and were a very popular location for lots of different kinds of social activities like:

Drinking coffee (duh!)

Trying to talk over loud music

Playing popular games like chess, or “Is this my cup?”

Watching performers that nobody asked to perform

Secretly judging the terrible way people park their horses

Eventually, everyone’s favorite hot bean water made its way to Europe through travelers to the holy city of Mecca.

Europe Catches Coffee Fever Thanks to the Pope

No, I’m not making that clickbaity heading up.

Coffee started to become so popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that people were suspicious that the unusual dark black drink was the “bitter invention of Satan.” These fears were so high that the drink was banned by the local clergy of

Venice in 1615. Eventually, Pope Clement VIII had to intervene. Thankfully, he found the drink appealing and gave it papal approval, paving the way for coffee to truly take over the world.

[Image of Religious Coffee Cup]

Throughout Europe, coffee houses continued to spring up and become centers for social interaction and baristas spelling people's names wrong. It's clearly spelled "Geoughf", not "Jeff". Try to get it right next time...

At the time, beer and wine were the choice of drink for breakfast. And that really explains a lot, doesn't it? Surprising nobody, people who switched to drinking coffee instead of alcohol felt more alert, had more energy, and were more productive at work. This is why modern offices have a steady supply of the delicious liquid on hand all the time. A caffeinated workforce is a happy workforce. Wait, no, that's not quite right. A caffeinated workforce is a jittery but more productive workforce. You can sleep on your own time, Jeff. Oh, sorry, Geoughf.

The Boston... Coffee Party?

Thomas Jefferson once said that coffee is "the favorite drink of the civilized world."

But it only became this in the American colonies after 1773. Up until this point tea was the preferred drink of the New World, and its dominance was only overturned after King George III decided to impose heavy taxes on tea. The American colonists revolted against these taxes by dumping thousands of pounds of tea into Boston Harbor. This became known as the Boston Tea Party and coffee emerged forever victorious in the aftermath.

The Other Black Gold

Entire nations owe their existence to coffee. The 18th century saw coffee emerge as one of the world's most profitable exports. Crude oil may be number one, but coffee could be considered the other Black Gold just behind it. Just look at all this totally-not-made-up data:

[Insert Table]

Varieties of Coffee Beans

There are four main varieties of coffee beans used today. According to District Roasters' [Link: Types of Coffee Beans and What Sets Them Apart, <https://districtroasters.com/blogs/news/types-of-coffee-beans>] they are:

Arabica (Coffee arabica),

Liberica (Coffee liberica),

Robusta (Coffee caniphora), and

Excelsa (Coffee liberica var. dewevrei)

Arabica

Arabica beans are the most common variety worldwide, accounting for 60 to 70% of global coffee production. This is due, in part, to its sweeter, less acidic flavor.

While boasting a good flavor, in terms of cultivation, Arabica beans are finicky plants. They require high elevations above sea level where rain is plentiful, and they are particularly prone to disease. In fact, the next variety we will discuss owes some of its popularity to the fact that Arabica beans were almost wiped out by disease toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Liberica

When the Arabica coffee plant nearly fully succumbed to "coffee rust", the Liberica variety became very popular for a time. Coffee had become such a large commodity that traders, farmers, and governments worldwide set out to find a suitable replacement for Arabica beans.

Unfortunately, the Liberica bean requires an even more specific climate than even the Arabica bean does. This leads to the Liberica bean not being well suited for mass production on a global scale.

The Philippines turned out to be the perfect location to cultivate the Liberica plants in any kind of significant volume and they saw their economy blossom as a result. However, this also ended up contributing to the eventual downfall of the Liberica variety. Because of this influx of wealth, the Philippines – a U.S. Territory at the time – declared its independence. In response, the U.S. imposed heavy economic sanctions on the new country which devastated the global Liberica coffee bean trade. No other country has been able to increase Liberica production enough to match the Philippines and the poor Liberica variety has never recovered.

### Robusta

If Arabica had an angsty goth brother, Robusta would be it. It lives up to its name by having a much stronger flavor and large amounts of natural caffeine. In fact, the caffeine content is so high that it acts as a natural insect repellent! Additionally, the plant itself is much hardier than the other three varieties, being able to grow in a wide number of climates and altitudes.

So, then why does this variety not dominate the global market? It does in some countries where stronger coffee is more popular – notably Europe, Africa, and the Middle East – but it simply comes down to flavor. Robusta is often described as tasting like burnt rubber. Yum! In most countries it has been relegated to playing second fiddle to Arabica, often appearing as a filler in dark roasts.

However, the harsher flavor of Robusta can be offset by cream and sugar, so it might be worth a try if that's how you enjoy your morning cup-of-joe anyway.

### Excelsa

And that finally brings us to Excelsa. While technically a member of the Liberica family, Excelsa is distinct enough to join the others on this list. Like the Liberica beans mentioned before, the Excelsa species is primarily grown in Southeast Asia. And although it has never experienced what anyone would call worldwide popularity, the unique flavor of Excelsa has gained somewhat of a cult following among coffee enthusiasts.

What makes Excelsa so special? It beautifully combines the flavors of both a light and dark roast in a single cup, and it also has a tart, fruity flavor.

[Image of Coffee Berries]

So, What Do I Do With All These Beans?

Ok, so I've got all these beans. But now what? How do I turn them into coffee?

#### Step 1: Roast 'em

The first step is to roast your beans. No, not the comedy kind of roast. The kind with fire! There are professional coffee roasters who can roast the beans for you, or you can buy your own roasting machine. You can also just roast them in a pan on your stove. The longer you roast them, the darker the roast will be.

[Insert Coffee Variety Roasting Time Comparison Chart]

#### Step 2: Grind 'em

This step is fairly straightforward, especially compared to some of the other steps. Take the roasted beans and grind them into a powder. The type of drink you're trying to make will determine the best grind size:

Coarse Grind: This larger coffee grind is best for brew methods that involve immersion in water, like a French Press.

Medium-Coarse Grind: This slightly smoother but still fairly large coffee grind is ideal to use with most pour-over brewers.

Medium Grind: This sandy-textured coffee grind is one of the most popular grinds, perfect for drip brewing coffee makers.

Medium-Fine Grind: This grind is like silky sand but doesn't stick together. It is another excellent choice for most pour-over brewers.

Fine Grind: This silky grind is finer than table salt. A fine grind is the perfect choice for espresso machines because it packs together well.

### Step 3: Brew 'em

Now for the hardest step – deciding what you want! These are just a few of the most common ways to brew coffee:

Espresso	Macchiato	Cafe Latte
Double Espresso	Long Macchiato	Mocha
Red Eye	Cortado	Vienna
Black Eye	Breve	Affogato
Americano	Cappuccino	Cafe au Lait
Long Black	Flat White	Iced Coffee

[Image of Types of Coffee Drinks]

And these are just the start! This list doesn't even include things like Cold Brew or just drinking your coffee Black. So many choices!

The folks at WebstaurantStore talk about all of these in more detail on their [Link: Types of Coffee Drinks, <https://www.webstaurantstore.com/article/397/types-of-coffee-drinks.html>] webpage.

### Step 4: Drink 'em

This is the easiest of all of the steps. I think you can figure this one out for yourself. Enjoy!

### Conclusion

Hopefully by now you can see just how wonderful coffee really is. It is so much more than hot bean water. It is that which gives life meaning. Truly our species will never attain a higher prize than this glorious... cough! Hm? Too much? Fine. Coffee's OK or whatever.

### References

National Coffee Association USA: History of Coffee

<https://www.ncausa.org/About-Coffee/History-of-Coffee>

District Roasters: Types of Coffee Beans and What Sets Them Apart

<https://districtroasters.com/blogs/news/types-of-coffee-beans>

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