

Popular Threads on Solosez

MAKING COFFEE

I assume that one thing most lawyers know about is coffee, so here's my Friday afternoon question:

12 Cup Coffeemaker with a Drip Basket, like a Mr. Coffee
You only want to make 2 cups
You have a standard size coffee scoop

I guess you use 12 - 16 oz water
How many scoops of coffee to make a good cup of coffee?

Help! I'm sleepless in St. Louis!

Ah, what an interesting question. Well, as all good lawyers know, "it depends." Some coffee makers have a special setting for under 4 cups of coffee. Others only know how to brew a pot. My belief is that you have to experiment. The amount of coffee, the type of coffee, the brewing time, and the quality of water are all variables. Experiment. See what works for your coffee maker and taste.

As an aside, I make fresh coffee on the weekend. No matter what I do, my wife thinks it is too strong and I think it is too weak. Heck even if I half the amount of coffee she still complains. Must be a family thing!

Bruce L. Dorner, New Hampshire

Rule of Thumb: Whole bean = one scoop per 8oz water. Ground = two scoops per 8oz. This is because whole bean is usually more potent -- ground coffee loses potency as it sits.

Meg Tebo, Illinois

My wife and I figured that out years ago. I like it stronger than she does, and figured out a long time ago that you can weaken strong coffee, but you can't strengthen weak coffee. So I add a little water to her cup and she's happy.

Michael A. Koenecke, Texas

According to my Brookstone electronic coffee scooper, if you want stronger coffee, use one more scoop than the number of cups you have in the pot. For average coffee, use one scoop per cup. For weaker coffee, one fewer scoop.

I prefer mine with two fewer scoops, so for a 12-cup carafe, use 10 level scoops of coffee.

This of course also depends on the size of your scoop. (Insert Steve O'Donnell joke here.)

Gina Madsen, Nevada

Sorry David, I just can't get beyond the "you only want to make 2 cups" part. I REALLY enjoy coffee.

I will say that at our office, we have a nice coffee maker (Krupps) and an espresso maker (a small illy Francis V). The coffee maker gets most use in the morning and we use the espresso machine in the afternoon for just this dilemma (wanting a touch more in the afternoon). It's a pod machine - don't judge, it has a great crema nonetheless! - and that allows for us to switch out flavors. I tend to use the darkest roast while my clerk takes decaf. It's a win-win.

Kelly Phillips Erb, Pennsylvania

I would use 2 heaping tablespoons for that much water.

We have a nice drip machine for the weekday mornings and we grind our beans right before using them. On the weekends, we use an old percolator which really makes the best coffee. And, for late afternoon pick-me-ups, I have a small french press and I heat the water with a hot pot.

I like coffee too much.

Sarah Carr, North Carolina

And for those of us that don't even drink coffee, this conversation is way over my head!

Susan Coakley, Maryland

Kelly, if you were a coffee drinker you would know how important this conversation is - vital!

David Rubin, Missouri

consider 6 fl. oz.

This makes a strong coffee however. Works with Starbucks brand beans, but some brands come out like mud.

Neal Fortin

Too little coffee in too much pot. Get a small french press pot. Takes a little practice to get it right, but this method makes one of the best cups

of coffee. Or do what I do and make Americano's using an espresso machine.

Bruce Wingate, New York

Bruce is dead on. French press can't be beat for one or two. It can be a pain to clean though.

Jake C. Eisenstein, Colorado

I would never judge Illy pods harshly. My father and now my brother-in-law make their living selling Illy coffee and machines in Ireland!

Elaine Martin, Texas

11 cups of ground coffee, 11 cups of water, let set for 11 days, have ready to drink coffee without bitterness that heat brings out.

pablo uesti

Now that's an expensive cup of coffee!

Craig McLaughlin, California

forgot, it's concentrated.

pablo uesti

I heard or read not long ago that using too little coffee makes coffee taste too strong. I've now forgotten the reasoning, although it made sense when I heard it. Might be something about extracting every last bitter bit from those few grounds, rather than just the best stuff from lots.

Chris Tozer, Illinois

This thread is making me depressed. My doc took me off coffee or rather, and to be more specific, caffeine. Now I must drink decaf (not even supposed to have that). I cling to the memory of a good cup of coffee. Decaf just ain't the same.

Lyza Sandgren, Georgia (paralegal)

You want a French press. Use a heaping tbs per cup as a starter, increase or decrease as you like. I only use a coffee pot when my wife's relatives visit, because I don't like them. Pods are too weak. French press is the only way.

If you don't notice a huge difference with a press, you might as well buy the happy, clean, mass marketed, over roasted, corporate stuff from Starbucks, because you have no soul to lose.

It's not the size of the scoop, it's the quality of the grind.

Steve O'Donnell, Pennsylvania

Decaf isn't the same (I too am off the caffeine and miss it), but Caribou Coffee has some REALLY good decaf. Seriously the best decaf I've ever had. You may want to look into ordering some from their website if there's no caribou near you (there isn't one near me).

Though I think what Chris may be referring to is that a Light roast is stronger than a dark roast but the dark roast because it hasn't been roasted as long (or something along those lines). I know it seems counterintuitive though.

Lesley Hoenig, Michigan

No - I'm talking about something I heard from someone like Alton Brown.

Although what you say is also true, at least about Caribou. Or that's what the servers say - the "dark" roasts taste stronger but have less caffeine.

Which version of Caribou decaf would you recommend? Their various blends taste so different from each other (at least the caffeinated ones) that a recommendation would probably be helpful.

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Chris Tozer

You forgot to mention skimming the skin off the top before you drink it!

I love coffee and used to carry my own 1 cup coffeemaker with me on trips. But I am also inherently lazy and cheap and when left to my own devices will drink what's in the pot before making a new one --- unless I'm in a mood where I want a cup of really good coffee and then I drag out my coffee press.

Karalyn Eckerle
(Not an attorney, but I still drink too much coffee)

French press coffee teaches coffee preparers and drinkers responsibility, contemplation, and a host of other valuable skills. Sure, every so often you'll break the carafe, but that's just the way the cookie crumbles. The French press is the only way to go if you want coffee at its best. Coffee brewed any other way is just swill. Anyone who's too lazy to make French press doesn't deserve good coffee.

jennifer j. rose, Mexico

I agree, the French Press is the best way to go. I love my French Press, even more than my espresso maker.

Lesley Hoenig

I usually just get the Caribou Blend, because I didn't realize there were so many choices! But if there were a caffeinated blend that you liked that is also available in decaf, I imagine that would be the closest match to what you want.

Lesley Hoenig

I am addicted to my French Press. I use the Bodum Young Press: it's got a plastic double wall handle system, which both insulates it to keep it hot and also keeps it from shattering. And it's fairly cheap. It is the only model with that insulative feature and is far preferable to the other Bodums without a double wall, which i have owned in the past.

One nice thing about french press coffee is that the coarser grounds keep better, so it's less of an issue if you buy preground. I don't want to deal with a grinder in the office and I'm a coffee snob.

Another benefit is that you can really control the brew: it is very simple to fiddle with brewing time and temperature and ground ounces and the like. That has a huge effect on the final outcome. So you can quickly learn to make YOUR PERSONAL ultimate cup of coffee, not the "ultimate cup as defined by the designer of your autodrip."

And the final nice thing is that you have a fair bit of flexibility in brew size.

For boiling, i use a cheap electric kettle; they're all the same.

For keeping it hot if I don't drink it right away, I use a Thermos TGS 1500 carafe. I cannot recommend that model highly enough. i researched quite a bit before buying and it is the best out there. (there is also a smaller TGS 1000, i think.) It is worth every penny.

Erik Hammarlund, Massachusetts

I like French press, but also enjoy my now ancient porcelain Melitta cone filter coffee maker. The little cone thing concentrates the flavor.....

Tom Crane, Texas

I do notice more of a "burned" flavor when I use the Melitta one cup filter rather than a drip maker. Maybe it's because I fill the filter to its top or maybe because I pour in boiling water?

Craig McLaughlin

I use an Aerobie Aeropress. Very awesome.

William Chuang, New York

Very helpful. What kind of grind works best with the French Press?

Tom Spiggle

French press is nice, but if you want seriously delicious coffee try the Toddy coffee maker. It's a cold brew system and saves money too. You dump a bag of freshly ground coffee in the tub and fill it with cold filtered water and let it sit overnight (or longer). Then you filter it out and put about 1/4 cup (or less if you are not addicted to this as I am) and add hot water to the top. The benefit is that it preserves the oils of the beans and so each cup tastes fresh as if it were just made from fresh ground beans. It saves money too. A single bag of coffee lasts me two weeks with this. Good stuff.

Stephanie L. Kimbro

Yea, maybe, the coffemeisters says its better to use hot water, not boiling water.

Tom Crane

Generally you want water between 195 and 205 degrees. I boil mine (my kettle shuts off automatically) and let it sit a minute or so before I brew. The same coffee can taste quite different brewed at differing temperatures, so fiddle until you find what you like. Also, coffee taste varies quite a bit by brewing technique; some beans aren't wonderful in a french press but are great for espresso, etc.

My general suggestion is to find a small local coffee house with coffee geeks behind the counter: ask them to recommend a few beans for french press.

Alternatively, buy online from one of the various excellent purveyors. I think Peets (like Starbucks) generally burns their beans. Intelligenstia coffee is great but insanely expensive. New Harvest is a Rhode Island roaster who is quite nice. My favorite french press coffee is this one: <http://www.deansbeans.com/coffee/ME.html> which I buy locally but which is also available online.

Not incidentally, most autodrip coffee makers (including some very expensive ones) do not reliably maintain the proper temperature for brewing, which is why they don't make very good coffee.

Erik Hammarlund

8 o'clock beans are always rated well by Consumer Reports - a very reasonably priced brand. I just started on a pound yesterday and

find it pleasing. Starbucks I like, but it does taste scalded.

Tom Crane

Nah--CR just doesn't test the good coffees; they only test nationally available ones.

8:00 are perhaps one of the best of the supermarket brands, but they're not nearly as good as the better microroasted stuff.

I can see buying 8:00 coffee if your only other option is Starbucks. But it's not. My personal favorite coffee is only \$7.25/pound whole bean and \$7.50 ground for french press. Unless my memory is mistaken, 8:00 costs over \$5. I don't think it's worth the savings.

Erik Hammarlund

Quick history, grew up in Seattle / Tacoma / Portland, never drank coffee until I went to work after college. Then had to learn to drink coffee from one of those old timey vending machines because it never had hot chocolate tea or soup in it. I'm obviously NOT a coffee snob - can drink most anything that is black and hot!

So what is a French press? How does it work and recommendations for a starter system if such a thing exists?

Sent from my iPhone
Mara T. Ballard

Here's a primer: <http://coffeegeek.com/guides/presspot>

Amazon has a great selection. The main question is how many coffee drinkers you'll be serving.

Wendell Finner, Florida

French press is basically putting your grinds directly into boiling water for a few minutes and then "pressing" out the grinds using a screen. When I go backpacking, I do this and leave the grinds in. It's called cowboy coffee--no idea if cowboys actually do that.

Jake C. Eisenstein

A French press is a ridiculous amount of work for a cup of coffee. I got one for free and gave it away after one try.

If you drink several pots a day, like I do, get a stainless steel decanter that keeps the coffee warm.

Maggie Kohls

I agree with Maggie although we still use a French press. Too many grounds end up in the coffee.

Jamison Koehler, Washington, D. C.

Every morning I get up and grind my coffee using an old-fashioned hand-crank grinder (that I got from my grandma). Then I boil some water (if I catch it in time, almost-boiling) in a saucepan and pour it into the french press. Wait about 4 minutes and press.

Drink it black as I always have.

I don't even like ordinary drip coffee (very much) anymore, the french-press is SO much better. Drip coffee tastes burnt to me.

Guess I'm a bit of a 'coffee snob', but I think it's definitely worth it. Best cup of coffee you'll ever have (IMHO).

Cynthia Hannah-White, Hawaii

PS - the grind is critical - if you grind it for 'drip' it'll be too fine, and you'll get more grounds in the FP coffee. You need a coarser grind, it just so happens that grandma's grinder works perfectly. I have heard that a 'burr grinder' is the best modern kind to get.

After following this thread, I decided to try the French Press method. My husband and I tried a cup of coffee made in the french press and then a cup brewed in our coffee maker. **BIG DIFFERENCE!** We both really liked the french press cup which didn't taste bitter compared to the other cup. The taste was smooth and there was quite a contrast between the two cups. It wasn't that much more work to prepare it that way, and we really enjoyed it.

I purchased a really inexpensive press at TJ Max, just so I could give it a try. Now, I'll spring for a better model.

Kim Wilson Vincent, Texas

For anyone else who wants to try French press coffee, I believe you can have it made that way at Starbucks. At least I think I've seen that on the menu board. That would save the expense of buying a press in case you don't like it.

Andrew Flusche, Virginia

French press is indeed available at Starbucks although many baristas seem not too enthusiastic about making it.

Robert Roth, New York

My geographic location may make it my obligation to add to this. A press is more (a little) more work. But if you are someone who can taste and appreciate the difference, you will have a hard time going back. If you are just interested in trying it, you can get presses anywhere from \$10 or so and they go up to almost \$100+. I just sent my mom, (lifelong coffee drinker/chef) one in the mail from starbucks that was about \$16 because she stayed with me for 3 months because she came to realize that she had become hooked on coffee made with a press. I think I have about 5 of them myself in various shapes, sizes, etc. If you have an IKEA nearby, they make a 8 cup glass one I think, that I grabbed (2 of them) for about \$10 and they also have a less expensive insulated model than you will find anywhere.

So, if you are interested in trying, check a local independent coffee shop, some sell a pot/press. If when you buy coffee, you like one roast (kind) over another....you probably have enough of an appreciation that you will probably appreciate coffee from a press, and \$10-20 will probably be money well spent. If you don't care for it, you can always make tea in it also. If you go to starbucks, and get that little 4 cup press, you can get beans there and they will grind it for you. (if you get hooked, you can grind it yourself a pot at a time).

Basic Rules:

1. 4 minutes of brewing. No more than 5. After that, you start getting the stuff that makes coffee bitter. If you are chronologically challenged, I think they even sell 4 minute timers.
2. Never boil. Too much heat is the enemy. If you heat your water to the boiling point, remove it for a minute to drop it just below the boiling point.
3. Course even grind is best. As mentioned before, a burr grinder set at the proper size, is best. While a blade is not as good as a burr grinder, I think it beats ground coffee that is getting stale.
4. Airtight stays freshest. That is one of the drawbacks of buying from a supermarket bin...exposed to air for an amount of time that you don't know.
5. Use good water. If your water taste bad, so will your coffee

The thing is, enjoy what tastes good to you. All those rules, are kinda like goals. Sometimes my coffee brews for 6 minutes, sometimes my water is too hot, etc. Try different beans/roasts. It is like wine or beer, different tastes.

As for the Starbucks "press coffee" on the menu: This might be one of their experiments in some test cities. (e.g. Seattle) Where some stores offered "clover" system brewing along with "premium" coffees. I was given the sell at a Starbucks test store, which said it was "like from a press". So, I tried it (and paid about a \$1 more). I had "aged Sumatra" beans, ground when I ordered it and then from this clover brewing system. I could definitely taste the difference in coffee beans, but I didn't think the clover system compared to a press. It tasted like it went through an espresso machine with steam, which I thought didn't get enough of the flavor/body. But if you like coffee, try it for yourself if you can. I think they are retooling the process.

Up here in the Pacific Northwest, we literally have multiple coffee shops at an intersection...sometimes 2 Starbucks less than 100 yards apart. In addition to starbucks, we have awesome independent roasters and shops and even "stealth starbucks". We have to do something with all this rainwater beside make beer!

John Jimenez, Washington

watch out for French Press - higher in calories and cholesterol...

David Rubin

I think everyone got the french press part. I personally don't like it. I like a good strong coffee (as well as mellow ones) but no matter how you grind it, you will always end up with fines in the cup. The beauty of the french press is also it's downfall. The lack of super fine filter which allows flavorful oils etc. to pass through, also lets the fines escape. A nice cup of coffee can be ruined for me, by just one taste of it. Also mentioned is the proper temp. Yes boiling is too hot, but the right temp is just off boil. A minute may be too long though. I'd turn it off, just wait a few moments, then pour. Around 195-200 is ideal I believe. I'm too lazy to wait for boiling water, I just use those automatic boiling pitcher things. They work really really fast. Oh, and I use a chemex coffee maker. Simple, attractive and use of the filters = no fines/grinds.

Joseph Dang

A similar concept is the Aerobie Aeropress. It uses air pressure to force the water through a paper filter with a short brewing time (30 seconds start to finish). It is very smooth and less acidic. It is available through Amazon, but just in a single cup model. <http://www.aerobie.com/Products/aeropress_story.htm>. It is also a little easier to clean up than is a french press.

Paul Hogan, California