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### Buying the Right Coffee Maker

by [LISA SKOLNIK](#)



Nearly 80 percent of American adults drink 2.5 cups of coffee per day, according to Mintel, a Chicago market research company. Since coffee drinkers make it and take it in so many different ways, it's clear that the coffee maker is an essential, but highly personal, piece of kitchen equipment.

Buying a coffee maker can be confusing because "the popularity of specialty coffee shops seems to be driving the design of pricey coffee makers that offer lots of features and flair," points out a review in Consumer Reports Online. "But virtually any model can make a good cup as long as you use decent coffee."

In fact, basic coffee-making technology hasn't changed in centuries. The beans must be ground and brewed by boiling or steeping.

"All coffee makers sleep it in some form of a drip system...even espresso makers, which use pressure to make a much more highly concentrated beverage," says Cary Salzman, President of Whole Latte Love, a seller of specialty coffee makers and espresso machines.

But there are countless variations on the simple drip coffee maker, from basic manual presses to fancy automatic machines that can grind beans, filter water, start and stop at certain times, make coffee and espresso, use premeasured pods and more.

**“The newest coffee makers are super-automatic bean-to-cup machines that do it all.”**

"The newest coffee makers are super-automatic bean-to-cup machines that do it all," says Salzman.

**Those who don't want it all can choose "stylish stainless-steel versions with thermal carafes and digital controls," points out Amy Waldron, coffee maker expert for Cookware.com**

So what kind of coffee maker should you buy? Here's how to decide.

**1. Assess your coffee drinking habits.** How many cups do you need to make—one or a whole pot? Do you need a timer so coffee is ready when you wake, or an auto-off because you're absent-minded? Do you need to see the controls in the dark because you're an early riser? Will you drink it right away or let it sit for a while? If the latter is the case "use a thermal carafe, because flavor degrades from the constant heat of a hot plate," Salzman cautions.

**2. Choose the right features for you.** Knowing your wants and needs will allow you to determine whether to get a thermal carafe, a timer, automatic controls or an LCD display screen. Other options include a pause-and-serve feature that allows you to pour before the brewing cycle is complete, a water filter, a permanent coffee filter (which eliminates the need for the paper versions), a pod machine (for consistently made cups), and a built-in grinder (to ensure freshness).

**3. Consider design.** Good basic details make a coffee machine easy to use and clean. Make sure the machine has simple, intuitive controls; a clearly marked water pot, an easy-access filter basket; and a manageable, dribble-free carafe. For small spaces, make sure it's compact.

What's new? Though the core technology hasn't really changed, the bells and whistles have. Here are some interesting options:

#### Simple Drip Coffee Makers



**Mr. Coffee TF5 4-Cup Pause 'n Serve** (\$21.20) is sturdy and economical and lets you pour a cup while the coffee is still brewing. It also has easy-read, dual water windows for accurate filling and a lighted on/off switch.



**Melitta ME2TMD Dual Travel Mug** (\$24.99) brews into one or two 14-ounce stainless-steel, car cup-holder-size thermal travel mugs. It also has an auto-shut-off for the forgetful, and its dual spout detaches for easy cleaning.



**Cappresso 471 CoffeeTec 10-Cup Coffee Maker** (\$219.99) features a new FrothXpress electronic steam pump to dispense hot milk directly into the coffee. It brews quickly (10 cups in under 8 minutes), has a unique closed stainless-steel carafe to protect coffee flavor and temperature, and sports easy-use controls, a bright LED display, auto-shut-off and a permanent filter.



**TechniVorm Chabline Thermo KB** (\$249.99) is a Dutch-designed machine that is one of only two to meet the Specialty Coffee Association of America's certification standards. Its unique engineering features an independent, efficient exchanger that heats water quickly and brews directly into a stainless-steel-lined server. This system preserves flavor very consistently. For simplicity, the machine only has two controls: an on/off button on the base and a filter basket switch to control the amount of water that moves through the grounds.

#### Bean-to-Cup Drip Coffee Makers



**Cuisinart DGB-900 Grind & Brew Thermal** (\$224.99) is a fully programmable, twelve-cup machine that comes with its own burr grinder (though it also works with preground coffee). It sports a thermal carafe, a brew pause, strength controls (choose mild, medium or strong), a charcoal water filter, a commercial-style coffee filter (which eliminates paper ones) and an innovative showerhead-style dispenser that distributes water evenly over the coffee for consistent and thorough extraction.



**Cappresso CoffeeTeam Therm Coffee Maker** (\$299) is a 10-cup machine that can be programmed up to 24 hours in advance. It features a burr grinder (but works with preground coffee, too), a thermal carafe, a permanent filter, a vacuum carafe (which eliminates the need for a hot plate), a commercial-style coffee filter and consistent temperature settings that brew coffee at 200 degrees Fahrenheit and keep it at 180 degrees for several hours.

#### Foolproof Coffee Pods



**Braun Tassimo TA1200 Hot Beverage System** (\$135.99) has a sleek, one-cup machine that serves up your choice of coffee, latte, hot chocolate or tea in under a minute. You can wash all of its parts in the dishwasher.



**Bunn My Café Tea & Coffee Pod Brewer** (\$303.99) brews single cups of coffee or tea that range from 4 to 12 ounces in less than 30 seconds—and endlessly, thanks to its large reservoir and strong stainless-steel boiler. It accommodates almost any kind of pod (unlike other machines that require specific brands) and can be left on all the time; it automatically goes into sleep mode after 6 hours and turns off after 26 hours of inactivity.

#### Espresso Coffee Makers



**Delonghi DECS Espresso Machine** (\$44.99) is a foolproof machine that lets you make two cups of espresso simultaneously, and sports a swivel-tilt frother to produce thick foam for cappuccinos or lattes.



**Delonghi EC155 Espresso Machine** (\$99.95) lets you make espresso with ground coffee or convenient pods. It has a powerful electric pump for efficient extraction, straightforward controls with 5 settings, a stainless-steel boiler for durability, a 35-ounce water reservoir and a removable drip tray.



**Gaggia Carezza Espresso Machine** (\$199) gives you pump power, heating capacity, brass components and a commercial-quality, extra-large filter, with superior results that make it one of the most popular new products on the market. Simple fingertip controls eliminate guesswork, a frothing wand makes foam with little fuss, two stainless-steel filter baskets let you make one shot or two, and a large water reservoir can be refilled during operation for an endless supply.



**Ascaso DREAM Versatile Espresso & Cappuccino Machine** (\$749) is pricey, but offers a big bang for the buck. It's designed for ease, versatility and looks, with sleek retro-styling that comes in 13 gorgeous hues. It can be used with ground coffee or prepackaged pods and features temperature controls for brewing coffee and frothing steam, a 44 ounce water tank, single-shot or double-shot filter baskets and a 12-month warranty on parts and labor.

Discover EDGE contributor [Lisa Skolnik](#) may splurge on an Ascaso DREAM espresso machine in Kid Blue.