

How You Brewin'?

"It is inhumane, in my opinion, to force people who have a genuine medical need for coffee to wait in line behind people who apparently view it as some kind of recreational activity." -Dave Barry



It must be understood that I like coffee. I like coffee a lot. Starbucks' coffee, Dunkin' Donuts' coffee, 7-11 coffee ("The Official Coffee of Law Office 101™"), it's all good as far as I'm concerned. Coffee is my best and truest friend.

I started drinking coffee in my early teens. My friends and I would camp out at the local IHOP deflecting the hate rays from the manager with our powerful indifference, and coffee was the cheapest thing on the menu, so that's what we got. Plus, they would grudgingly give us free refills. The Royal Oak, Michigan IHOP offered a playfully amusing brew of coffee/insecticide. The secret to its horribleness was that those coffee urns had not been cleaned since the Harding administration, so the coffee was bitter, acidic, and oddly, gritty. More please.

My coffee revelation occurred when I was 13 or 14 years old. I was in a swanky hotel for some reason, probably a mistake of some kind. I ordered and was served a cup of coffee. My life changed in that moment. I was absolutely amazed at how mellow, fragrant, creamy, almost caramel-like that coffee tasted. I've been chasing that coffee dragon ever since.

I like coffee because it gives me the illusion that I might be awake. -Lewis Black

Like most people, I've been making coffee for decades. I've used percolators, drip machines, pour over coffee makers. They're all okay, producing similar tasting coffee. My son gave me a Keurig® K-cup pod machine for my birthday. Although pretty slick and super-convenient, the pods are crazy expensive. On top of that, those pods are the new eco-villain. In an interview with the Atlantic magazine, the inventor of the K-cup expressed regret for his having come up with the idea of the K-cup at all due to the environmental implications. In 2014 there were enough discarded K-Cups to circle the earth at least 12 times. But I use them anyway, for what do I care for your puny Earth?

Actually, once you buy a Keurig® machine, the machine owns you. They are a bit like ink-jet printers in that once you have one you will end up paying an astronomical price for the ink or the coffee; they are just cheap delivery systems for their particular outrageously expensive product. Coffee bought in a K-cup will cost between \$20 and \$50 a pound. That's a lot.

That being said, the coffee from a K-cup can often be pretty good. That and the

convenience make it clear why the things are so popular. And if you poke around on the internet, you can find good K-cup deals, including a few that are made using biodegradable pods. But no one recycles these things. No one.

Way too much coffee. But if it weren't for the coffee, I'd have no identifiable personality whatsoever. -David Letterman

So, I'm in the 5th floor kitchenette near my office and I see an examining attorney washing out some strange contraption consisting of springs, levers, flying buttresses, and what have you. This device, clearly inspired by Roswell technology, is, she tells me, a "French press." I had heard of this. I had been reading an article a couple weeks earlier by someone trying (and failing) to convince me to stop using K-cups. The author suggested making coffee using a French press instead. He claimed it made the best tasting coffee in the world. Best tasting coffee in the world, 'eh? Well, I gotta try that.

I found a Bodum® Brazil 34 ounce French press for \$16 at Target and bought it. What you do is put about an ounce of coarsely ground coffee into the thing for every pint or so of hot water. Let it sit for 4 minutes, then slowly push down the filter plunger separating the grounds from the brewed coffee. Voila – coffee! Now, what kind of coffee should I get?

Thank you for your coffee, monsieur. I shall miss that when I leave Casablanca. -Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman) in Casablanca

About a year ago walking along the Rehoboth Beach boardwalk I came upon a beautiful woman selling coffee out of a kiosk in front of one of the hotels. It was about 10:00AM, and I am a shallow male, so I bought a cup. Whoa! This coffee was amazing, reminiscent of my now mythical swanky hotel coffee from 45 years before. I went back and found out that it was Illy® coffee. I found some Illy® coffee at the Rehoboth Beach Giant® for only 3-4 times the price of normal coffee. I bought some and made a pot in a drip machine. Another of life's let-downs; it was nothing special.

So, for my new magical French Press, I poked around on the internet and found that the most popular coffee in Italy is "Lavazza® Super Crema." I got some, ground it coarse, made the coffee in my new French press, and poured a cup. Heaven. This was it! At long last here was swanky hotel coffee! In fact, I'm sure that the Illy® beach coffee would have tasted just as good if I'd made it this way instead of in a drip machine.

I started using the French press every day, but it does take a few minutes to heat the water, and a few more to brew it, then there's the cleaning. And I'm running late for work. Again.

So after a few weeks, do I still use the French press? Yes, I do. I use it on weekends, and maybe once during the week. The rest of the time I use the Keurig® with its satanic K-cups. That thing is just too convenient, and even though the coffee it makes isn't as good as the coffee from a French press, as David Lynch supposedly said "Even bad coffee is better than no coffee at all."

We want to do a lot of stuff; we're not in great shape. We didn't get a good night's sleep. We're a little depressed. Coffee solves all these problems in one delightful little cup. -Jerry Seinfeld

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