



Paul Jackson, Managing Director of Danes Gourmet Coffee, talks about achieving the perfect combination of bean selection, blending, and proper grinding to create a beautiful cup of coffee.

# The perfect marriage of beans, blends & grinds

The coffee you make is only as good as your raw materials. Just as a top chef sources the freshest produce and ingredients available to create a fabulous meal, a great barista finds the best quality beans. The same applies at home.

Each coffee producing country has its own grading system for beans. There is no universal grading system for coffee, so to make sure you're getting the best of the bunch, you'll need to source it from a specialty supplier.

"Specialty" is the classification given to coffee that is sourced from only the top grade in each region. If you source beans from a true specialty or gourmet coffee roaster, be assured they've used a meticulous selection process when sourcing their product. They will only take the highest grade available. In most cases, just 10% of the beans produced in any given region are good enough to be included in this classification.

All coffee producing countries have the potential to be able to offer high quality produce. Danes sources its beans from over 10 different countries including Brazil, Ethiopia, Kenya and Guatemala. Each region produces coffee with its own unique qualities, which arise from variations in weather, soil conditions and processing methods.

## THE ART OF BLENDING

Single origin coffee is that which comes from one country. There are some amazing single origins being sourced these days. Often, singles will lack the flavour complexity desired. When buying coffee, you are most often buying a blend, which is a combination of single origins.

Blending is an art and is about finding the right balance for optimum flavour. For example, some origins are more acidic, while others have more body. Coffee is similar to wine, or any product closely connected to fresh produce, in that it is always changing and evolving according to seasons - like a vintage. Specialty coffee suppliers are constantly refining their selection based on these changes.

Suppliers will often create diverse blends to appeal to different tastes and preferences. For example, at Danes, the Caribbean blend of single origins from around the Caribbean Sea has a low to medium acidity, is smooth, and displays a velvety mouth feel. The Mocha Gold blend offers strong chocolate flavours with hints of malt, thanks to the inclusion of a small percentage of Indian Monsooned Malabar in the blend.

Blending is important, but it still comes back to the quality of the beans, and sourcing and roasting well are critical. Sub-par bean selection is something that can't be overcome, even by the most skilled roaster and barista!

## GRIND AS YOU GO

Having sourced fresh, specialty beans from a gourmet roaster, it's then a case of making sure you are doing everything possible to extract the true taste potential of the beans. As soon as beans are ground, the flavour begins to disappear as the oils protected inside the bean are now exposed to air, and oxidation begins. This "de-gassing" is what causes flavour loss and a stale tasting cup of coffee.

Grinding your own beans, as opposed to buying pre-ground, is one of the simplest steps for improving the quality of your home brew. An indication of just how important it is to "grind as you go" is that commercial cafes won't be competitive using pre-ground coffee.

Avoid pre-ground at all costs.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT GRINDER

Grinding with precision can be tricky, but proper grinding is a critical link in the chain of espresso making. When selecting a grinder, keep in mind that you really do get what you pay for, so buy the best you can afford.

Burr grinders are better than the cheaper blade grinders, which are less effective at cutting and crushing the beans into consistently sized particles.

A good quality burr grinder will provide more consistent coffee particle size for efficient coffee extraction. Efficient cutting and grinding of the beans will allow the stripping of the oils which in turn results in more flavour being released. As the burrs wear, they will become less effective. The duller a burr is, the longer it takes to crush and grind, which can cause the grounds to heat up. This is damaging and impacts on flavour.

## THE SCIENCE OF THE GRIND

The perfect grind is not too coarse, and not too fine, so that the extraction time is right on cue.

If the grind is too fine, the coffee and water will be in contact for too long, and the coffee will burn. Too coarse a grind will result in under-extraction with little to no intense flavours and a sour taste.

You know the grind is right when the extraction time is 30 seconds, and it yields a volume of 25ml out of the dribbler.

Since coffee is hygroscopic, it absorbs moisture in the air, so humidity is a contributing factor to extraction time. Adjust your grind accordingly.

Experiment at home and before long you'll be on your way to a perfectly prepared espresso, every time.