



Paul Jackson, Managing Director of Danes Gourmet Coffee and Danes Gourmet Coffee Institute, explains the basics of coffee lingo.

# Talking coffee:

## *The language of espresso*

For expert tasters, baristas and cafe owners alike, speaking the language of espresso is an essential skill.



**L**ong gone are the days of ordering or preparing a simple ‘cup of coffee’. As a sophisticated coffee culture has evolved, so has the vocabulary to describe its every nuance. The last decade has even seen the emergence of entirely new words and phrases that help deepen our understanding of espresso.

The language of espresso enables tasters, baristas and cafe owners to articulate and share knowledge – a key part of professional growth. Becoming a great coffee creator begins with developing a palate sophisticated enough to distinguish between a good coffee and a great one. Similar to terms used in fine wine, coffee lingo helps define parameters of taste, texture and technique. Being able to talk the coffee talk and describe a pour enables a culture of training, essential to the success of any café.

The essence of any barista’s vocabulary is the standard café menu. Most of this has its roots in the Italian language. The famed cappuccino, for example, derives its name from the Capuchin monks. Similarly, the macchiato comes from the Italian word for ‘stained’, and ristretto refers to a ‘restricted’ shot.

Below are some key words and phrases that form the basis of the language of espresso. By no means is this a comprehensive glossary though – it’s always worth considering furthering your knowledge with a barista training course.

### TOP ESPRESSO WORDS AND PHRASES

- **BARISTA** – Italian for bar person, used to describe a professional espresso coffee maker.
- **ESPRESSO** – Traditionally meaning an ‘expressed’ coffee brewing method. A shot of coffee made by forcing hot water under nine bars of pressure through tightly compacted, finely ground coffee.
- **CAPPUCCINO** – An espresso, steamed milk and 10mm of

foam. The name is said to derive from the Capuchin monks whose hoods resemble a cappuccino’s cap of crema-coloured foam.

- **CAFÉ LATTE** – Italian for ‘coffee and milk’; an espresso with two thirds steamed milk and 10mm of foam.
- **MACCHIATO** – Meaning mark, or spotted; an espresso with a splash of steamed milk.
- **DOPPIO** – A double shot of espresso (with one shot of hot water).
- **RISTRETTO** – Meaning restricted; a shorter or smaller espresso made using the same amount of grinds, but less espresso is poured.
- **ROASTING** – The process and art of applying heat to develop and unlock the green beans’ potential.
- **SINGLE ORIGIN** – Coffee bean originating from a single country.
- **BLEND** – A combination of individual coffee origins that combine to create a more complex flavour profile; ideally suited to milk-based coffees.
- **COFFEA ARABICA** – The main species of coffee bean and larger bean of the coffee species. Smoother, high acidity with approximately 2 per cent caffeine.
- **COFFEA ROBUSTA** – The other major coffee species; a smaller bean, more oval in shape, more body, more bitter, low acidity with approximately 4 per cent caffeine.
- **CREMA** – A honeycomb coloured froth of tiny bubbles produced during the espresso extraction from coffee oils.
- **CUPPING** – A traditional method of coffee tasting used by professionals.
- **ACIDITY** – The sharp, tart taste characteristics in coffee.
- **SMOOTH** – A coffee low in palate acidity.
- **BURR GRINDER** – The type of grinder that features two disks, one stationary, one rotating, which slice away portions of a coffee bean into very fine particles.
- **CC** – Many espresso machines are made in Europe, and the unit of measurement often used for boiler sizes is expressed in cc, which is the same as ml (millilitre).
- **EXTRACTION** – The brewing process of espresso; hot water is forced through ground beans, which in turn “extracts” flavours, oils, and other elements.
- **OVER-EXTRACTED** – Coffee or espresso that has had brew water exposed to ground coffee for too long. Can result in coffee with a bitter or burnt taste.
- **PULL** – A term used to describe



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brewing a shot of espresso. Comes from the action used to prepare espresso in days when machines with levers were used.

- **GROUP HEAD** – The brewing chamber at the front of an espresso machine where heated water travels through to coffee located in the group handle.
- **GROUP HANDLE** – The espresso machine handle where coffee is placed into, which is placed into the group head prior to engaging the machine pump for espresso extraction.
- **NAKED HANDLE** – A group handle with the base cut out in order to expose the porta filter, or filter basket. This enables a barista to pour directly into the cup; since you can see the whole pour there is no hiding a bad extraction.

- **TAMPING** – The act of pressing and compacting a bed of loose, finely ground coffee, to prepare for brewing espresso.
- **FREE POUR** – Extracting coffee via use of the semi-automatic button exclusively, rather than using the volumetric settings on the machine. The main way to pour a shot as a professional barista.
- **FREE POUR LATTE ART** – Creating a design in the crema and milk foam by pouring straight from jug to cup.
- **ETCHING** – Use of a tool to sculpt or draw patterns in the crema and milk foam canvas.
- **TEMPERATURE SURFING** – A method of equalising the water temperature of an espresso machine; involves purging the group head prior to engaging the handle.