



At Four Barrel Coffee in San Francisco, a drip revolution is happening.

Coffee's Next Wave

FRESH IDEAS, FROM BEANS TO ROASTING AND BREWING, ARE LEADING TO AMAZING COFFEES.

A SMALL BUT INFLUENTIAL group of coffee roasters from San Francisco to Chicago to Portland, Oregon and Durham, North Carolina, has ushered the drink into a new wave of connoisseurship — one that requires even more attention to detail but leads to a superior morning cup.

Whereas Starbucks and other gourmet vendors have long la-

beled their beans by country, the new pioneers (see “The Best of the New Beans,” right) travel the globe to buy beans from tiny individual farms, allowing you to get coffee from a single supplier the way you buy wine from a specific vineyard. And while Starbucks roasts everything ultra-dark, new superlight roasts, made with more grounds per cup, offer

far more complex flavors.

Next-wave roasters are also obsessive about freshness: Many of them stamp the precise roasting date on every bag (and police their inventory carefully) because quality falls off a cliff after just a couple of weeks. Esoteric tasting notes with wine-world descriptors (“strong citrus on the mid-palate”) come with the terrain, but pretense aside, it's the lighter, brighter, richer, and more nuanced flavor that makes the old guard taste stale and burnt.

As for making the stuff, it's back to old-school brewing with a tweak or two, not high-test espresso machines (see below). It might be more involved than what you're used to, but the payoff is a kick. —DANIEL DUANE

The Best of the New Beans



FOUR BARREL
Kenya Kanguu: bright and electrifyingly intense; not for the faint of heart (\$19; fourbarrelcoffee.com).



INTELLIGENTSIA
Kenya Gichathaini: aromatic, with a blackberry or blackcurrant intensity (\$27; intelligentsiacoffee.com).



BLUE BOTTLE
Giant Steps: a strong case for a blend amid the single-sourced beans that dominate the high-end market (\$18; bluebottlecoffee.net).



COUNTER CULTURE
Finca Nueva Armenia: from Guatemala, sweet notes of caramel and chocolate-almond (\$12; counterculturecoffee.com).



STUMPTOWN
Guatemala Finca El Injerto: the quintessence of the region's beans, with a velvet-chocolate backbone (\$14; stumptowncoffee.com).

THE COFFEE GEEK'S GUIDE TO HOME BREWING

- 1 Bring 20 oz good, clear water to a boil and grind 3/4 oz coffee beans to medium-fine (soft, but gritty enough to clump when pressed between fingers).
- 2 Pour hot water through a Melitta cone (this rids inner filter of paper taste) into your cup, then pour 10 oz of the boiling water into a measuring cup.
- 3 Empty the water from your cup, add the grounds to the filter, and pour several tablespoons of the measuring-cup water over the grounds to wet them.
- 4 After a few seconds, slowly pour the rest of the measuring-cup water over the grounds, stirring the mix while you pour.
- 5 When the coffee has drained from the filter, stir once and consume immediately. You've earned this one.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

Burr Grinders

Coffee, once ground, begins losing flavor and potency after about five minutes; if you're not spot-grinding beans for every cup, you're not in the game — and that old \$10 blade grinder ain't going to cut it. The one you want, according to Stephen Morrissey of Chicago's Intelligentsia, is a burr grinder, which uses a pair of hard grinding elements — metal plates or cones, typically — to crush the beans. Burr grinders can be set to various degrees of fineness for different preparation methods, and they produce a more even particle size than blade grinders. Our pick: **The Capresso Infinity Conical Burr Grinder** (right), which grinds from coarse to extra fine (\$140; surlatable.com).

