



# Coffee makers

## NEED TO KNOW

For the best coffee, you need an espresso machine; it gives a more intense hit than a filter machine or cafetiere. (You can dilute espresso to get 'normal' coffee but you lose the superior flavour.)

### TRADITIONAL MODELS

These are for enthusiasts, and there's a fair amount of preparation involved: measuring and inserting coffee, and adding water.

The machine heats water at high pressure (you'll hear it hiss) and forces it through the coffee. Then, gugging away, it drips espresso into your cup.

Most models can also heat and froth milk for latte or cappuccino.

There are several parts to wash but most machines are easy enough to use.

Pricier traditional models often include grinders, which let you make a fresher brew than ground coffee. Separate grinders cost from £20.

### POD-ONLY MACHINES

If you're less particular about taste and short on time, try a 'pod' machine. These use pre-prepared packages instead of ground coffee. There's a touch of the vending machine about them but they're simple to use.

The drawback is that you're stuck with the flavours available as pods. To get around this, buy a traditional espresso machine that can use both ground coffee and pods (these have a rating for 'Pods' in our table, p43).

### BEST BUYS

The range of coffee machines is vast, catering for every budget from around £50 to well over £600. But price is no guide to quality: for example, the £650 Siemens (14) machine we tested is nowhere near as good as any of our Best Buys, which start at £90.

#### TRADITIONAL

All our Best Buys in this category make high-quality espresso. They're brilliant at extracting flavour from the coffee grounds and produce a good *crema* (the froth that floats on top of espresso).

After supping several mediocre offerings from rival machines, we found the **Briel (1)**. Its espresso tastes full and round, and has a golden *crema* which is intense and solid; the aroma is strong, rich and smooth.

This neat and compact machine, in black and silver,

is pleasingly simple to use. For example, cappuccino froth is easy to make: the steam pipe works quickly and lets you make a stiff foam, doubling the volume of milk.

Interestingly, it makes better espresso using pods than any of the dedicated pod machines do. So it's still an excellent choice if you sometimes want your coffee in a hurry and with minimum fuss. The type of pod it uses is called ESE, which is available in a wider choice of flavours than other types of pod.

And, best of all, this machine is an absolute bargain at just £145 from independent retailers.

Our second Best Buy – the **Bodum (2)** – is a quite different proposition. Where the Briel's design is unobtrusive and subtle, the

Bodum's is quirky and eye-catching: this is definitely the machine to buy if you want something striking.

Its main section's egg-like metal-and-glass casing warms cups, houses the well-conceived controls and contains the filter. The outer part contains the water reservoir, which can be replaced by a two-litre mineral water bottle. Mineral water won't improve the taste – it's just there for the benefit of the image-conscious.

At £400 from Comet, the Bodum is expensive, but we were intrigued by this unusual design and keen to see whether its coffee was as interesting. Happily, it was: the excellent espresso has a dark and intense aroma and its taste is wonderful and thick, with no bitterness.

You can either use the machine's predetermined dose



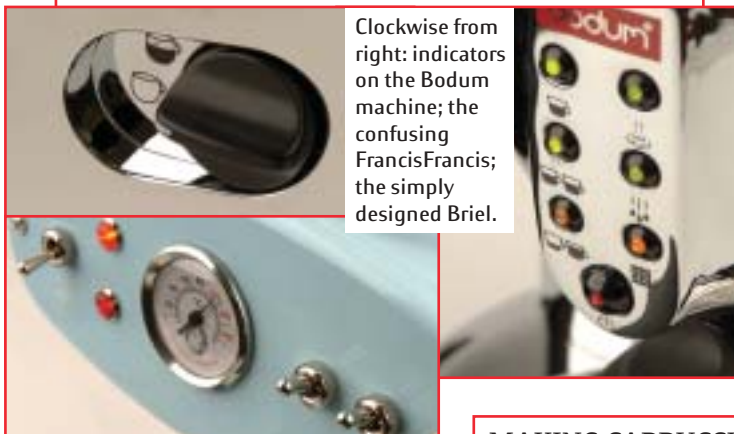
**1 Briel**  
TRADITIONAL

## SWITCHES AND CONTROLS

Espresso machines don't have many functions but some of the switches and controls are a bit confusing for novices.

This Briel keeps it simple, with dials to switch on the power and begin the brewing process. A separate knob at the side controls the steam pipe for making cappuccino. Meanwhile, the Bodum (2) has helpful individual buttons which light up to indicate what function is being used.

Less useful are the minimalist switches used on the retro-styled FrancisFrancis (15). These switches are unmarked so their purpose isn't obvious without referring to the instruction book, and it's not clear whether they're on or off.



Clockwise from right: indicators on the Bodum machine; the confusing FrancisFrancis; the simply designed Briel.



of water or use its manual setting to choose the amount. The pre-set amount is quite slight and we preferred a more diluted espresso using the manual setting (you can store your preferred amount in the Bodum's memory). It does also take ESE pods, but they produce rather average espresso on this machine.

If you're a cappuccino lover, though, this is the Best Buy to go for. Its frothing action is extremely efficient: it triples the volume of milk and makes for a lovely cappuccino.

If you would prefer something a little less flashy – in both looks and cost – the **Morphy Richards (3)** will suit you perfectly. There are plenty of more glamorous machines around, from the retro-styled Kenwood (7) and multicoloured FrancisFrancis (15) to the Siemens (14), with its digital display. But it's great to be able to recommend one of the simplest and cheaper models.

The Morphy Richards, just £90 in Currys or £100 from Comet, makes great-tasting espresso with a good, dark-

## MAKING CAPPUCCINO

Like this Bodum, all the espresso machines can make hot and frothy milk to convert espresso into cappuccino.

Make the espresso first. Next, turn on the steam pipe to let any trapped water flow through before starting. Then fill a small jug to one third

with semi-skimmed milk. Switch your machine to its cappuccino setting and put the steam pipe into the jug.

Turn on the pipe and let the steam blow on to the milk's surface. Move the jug gently up and down to fold air into the milk. You want to

hear a high-pitched whining. Stop if it growls, as that means the milk is nearing boiling point and will go flat.

When it's ready, pour the hot milk into the espresso and spoon on the froth.



# WIN

We've got five Briel Versatile Due coffee makers to give away. See p56 for details







**17 Krups**  
POD

### CONVENIENT COFFEE

This Krups and the Magimix (18) take Nespresso pods, which look similar to UHT milk capsules. The Philips (19) and some of the traditional machines use Easy Serving Espresso (ESE) pods, which resemble teabags.

ESE pods offer the widest range of flavours. Different

varieties of Nespresso are available, but they don't all fit in all the machines.

Both types of pod are more expensive than ground coffee: pods cost around 25p a cup, ground coffee costs around 11p a cup. And both use huge amounts of wasteful packaging.



Top: an ESE pod of coffee  
Bottom: Nespresso coffee capsules

gold *crema*, and a creamy, warm aroma. It's easy to use, with clear, uncomplicated instructions.

Our only criticism is that making froth for cappuccino is a little trickier than with other machines. You can't adjust the pressure in the steam pipe so it's a bit difficult to control. Nevertheless, we managed to make some pleasantly airy foam and, overall, we really like this machine (though it doesn't work with pods).

The Gaggia (4) narrowly misses out on being a Best Buy because it's a chore to clean and prepare for use, and a bit wobbly. It's still worth considering, though; it makes excellent espresso with both ground coffee and coffee beans. It's £399 from independent retailers.

### POD-ONLY MACHINES

We found that you get far better results using pods in the traditional machines than in pod-only machines. We recommend the traditional Briel (1) even if you never want to use ground coffee.

However, if the Briel's £145 price tag seems too steep, go for the pod-only £100 **Krups (17)**. It's small and light, delightfully easy to use and has virtually nothing that needs cleaning. Its espresso is crisp and sparkly with a rich, sweet, spicy taste. It lacks the burn and bite of a full, strong, espresso, but is good overall. It's available in 'titanium' from John Lewis or 'ivory' (as pictured) from Harrods.

The Magimix (18) machine looks similar to the Krups but its espresso is rather dull.

### Traditional machines

#### MODEL

- 1 Briel Versatile Due ES 38C-TB
- 2 Bodum Granos 3020
- 3 Morphy Richards Roma 47505
- 4 Gaggia Paros
- 5 KitchenAid Artisan 5KES100
- 6 DeLonghi Magnifica EAM3200S
- 7 Kenwood Café Retro ES550
- 8 Gaggia Classic
- 9 Krups F88042 Vivo
- 10 DeLonghi BAR 14
- 11 Gaggia Cubika
- 12 Russell Hobbs Pump Espresso 11767
- 13 Morphy Richards Café Rico
- 14 Siemens T 64001
- 15 FrancisFrancis XI
- 16 DeLonghi BCO 65BS

### Pod-only machines

#### MODEL

- 17 Krups Nespresso
- 18 Magimix Nespresso M100
- 19 Philips Senseo HD 7810

### TABLE NOTES

We tested best-selling and newly launched models from leading brands. We looked at a wide price range to see whether more money gets you a better coffee maker.

#### Specification

**Size** S denotes small, M medium and L large. **Pod type** The brand of pod required. (The traditional models that use pods all use ESE.)

**Two cups** These machines can make two espressos at a time.

**Features** A measure of how many desirable features there are, such as milk frothers, a removable,

transparent water tank, cup-warmers and water level gauge.

#### Convenience

**Setting up** This covers clarity of instructions, ease of filling the tank and adding coffee or pods.

#### Quality of coffee

**Looks, Aroma, Taste** Our verdict on espresso made with dark roast Arabica ground coffee for the espresso machines and with recommended pods for the pod machines. **Beans** For machines with grinders, overall rating for espresso using dark-roast Arabica

beans. **Pods** Overall rating for espresso made with ESE pods in traditional machines.

**Frothing** Appearance and volume of frothed milk.

#### SCORE

Ignores price and is based on:  
Quality of coffee 60%  
Convenience 30%  
Features 10%

#### KEY

★ ☆ ○ ●  
Best —————> Worst  
■ Best Buy

## How to make the perfect espresso

There's a lot of jargon associated with coffee. But worry not – wired on caffeine and with the finest Arabica flowing through our veins, we can explain all.

### THE SCIENCE BIT

Coffee beans contain essential oils which are released after the beans are roasted and finely ground. Your coffee machine creates pressure which forces water through the tightly packed coffee grounds to extract the oils' flavour.

As water is 'expressed' through the coffee grounds, the oils are agitated and create a layer of *crema*. This is a golden froth that

should be rich, firm and creamy enough to float on top of your coffee until you finish. It's crucial in enhancing the smell and taste of the drink; in fact, without it you're just drinking strong coffee.

### THE FINER POINTS

To get the perfect brew, we recommend Arabica beans, which give warmth and thickness. Choose a blend with 15 per cent Robusta beans for extra intensity. Make sure the beans are finely ground.

Then press, or 'tamp', the grounds into the filter holder to create a barrier for the water to flow through. If the

coffee isn't packed down, the water will flow too quickly and won't extract the flavour.

For the best flavour, your machine should dispense

the espresso in about 17 to 25 seconds. Warm your cups while this is happening to keep the coffee hot and preserve its flavour.



Left: the *crema* produced by a good machine Right: an espresso from a poor machine



Specification					Convenience		Quality of coffee						Score
Price (£)	Size	Weight (kg)	Two cups	Features	Setting up	Cleaning	Looks	Aroma	Taste	Beans	Pods	Frothing	(%)
145	S	3	✓	☆	★	☆	★	☆	★		☆	☆	76
400	M	10.5	✓	☆	☆	○	☆	☆	★		○	★	73
90	M	8.1	✓	☆	☆	○	☆	☆	☆			○	70
399	L	10.5	✓	☆	○	○	☆	★	★	☆	○	☆	67
499	L	11.8	✓	☆	★	★	○	○	○		○	☆	67
380	L	10	✓	☆	★	☆	○	○	○	☆		●	66
145	M	7	✓	○	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆		☆	●	65
299	S	8	✓	☆	○	○	○	☆	☆		☆	○	64
80	S	2.5	✓	○	●	☆	○	☆	☆			☆	63
50	S	3	✓	○	★	☆	●	●	●			★	56
129	S	5	✓	☆	○	☆	●	●	●		☆	○	55
70	S	3	✓	☆	☆	☆	○	○	○			●	48
55	L	5.7		●	○	☆	●	●	○			○	46
650	L	11		●	○	○	●	●	●	★		●	45
375	M	7	✓	○	●	○	●	●	○		☆	●	42
50	L	4.5		●	○	○	●	●	●			★	39

Specification						Convenience		Quality of coffee			Score
Price (£)	Size	Weight (kg)	Pod type	Two cups	Features	Setting up	Cleaning	Looks	Aroma	Taste	(%)
100	S	3	Nespresso		☐	★	★	☆	☆	○	67
120	S	3	Nespresso		☐	★	★	☆	○	☐	58
50	M	2	ESE		○	★	★	☆	☐	○	55