

UCL Educational Psychology Coffee Corner

Brewing great coffee with the AeroPress

by Dr Phil Stringer

“What’s a relatively low cost option to making great coffee?” I have been asked by a number of people. There is a straightforward answer: the AeroPress.



Alan Adler of Aerobie flying ring fame, and many other inventions, invented the AeroPress. It is a quick and easy method and with a little care it’s possible to produce a wonderful cup of coffee, every time, which brings out the subtle flavours of the beans that you have used.

To guarantee this you need a few other bits of equipment: a small set of scales, a hand grinder – such as a Porlex, Rhino or Hario, an air tight container, and a timer. You also need freshly roasted beans that are roasted for brewing coffee rather than espresso and an airtight container to keep them in. I never buy beans from a supermarket unless the roasting date is on the packet and their origin is specified. In the last few years the number of artisan roasters has rapidly increased, so it’s much easier to find and buy carefully roasted beans that are to my taste.

Back to the AeroPress: although Aerobie recommends a method that takes about a minute to make, there are what seems like an ever-expanding variety of methods. During the AeroPress world championships (yes, there are) held in 2016, over 50 different methods were used.

Some speciality coffee shops list an AeroPress coffee on their menu, and that’s how I came by my favourite method. Just behind King’s Cross Station, in Granary Square, is Caravan, and the first time I called in there I had one of the best AeroPress coffees I had ever tasted and better than how I was making it at the time. I asked the barista how she had made it. It turned out that she is from New

Zealand, had taken part in the AeroPress world championships and was happy to share her method. It is simple and, along with many other methods, involves inverting the AeroPress.

AeroPress Caravan Method

1. Push the AeroPress plunger in so that it just sits inside the larger cylinder
2. Invert the AeroPress, the end that the cap screws on will be at the top and the numbers on the cylinder will be upside down
3. Grind 17gms of beans, adjusting the grinder so you produce grinds slightly finer than ground sea salt
4. If you use the paper filters than come with the AeroPress, put a filter paper in the cap and wet it with ht water from the kettle
5. Tip the grinds into the cylinder
6. Pour water that has gone off the boil (top 80 degrees to mid 90 degrees C is an ideal range) up to mark 3, stir for a few seconds and then leave for a total of 30 seconds
7. Top-up with water, stir, put the filter cap on and leave for 1 minute and 30 seconds
8. Turn the AeroPress the right way up, sit it on top of a mug, leave it for about another 1 minute and 30 seconds and then slowly and steadily push the plunger so the coffee filters through into your mug (this step takes about 1 minute and 45 seconds in all)
9. Remove the cap and push the filter and grounds into the recycling bin

There are simpler, quicker methods and it is worth experimenting until you find a method that you particularly enjoy.

