

# The Vocabulary of Coffee

Next to oil, coffee is the most widely traded commodity. The consumption of coffee is about 400 billion cups a year and continues to grow. Like any other popular commodity, coffee has its share of controversies.

Over the years and across the globe, controversies over coffee have arisen. It had been called the drink of the devil, the drink that caused men's impotence, an evil brew and many other expletives. Over a cup of coffee literary masterpieces, national testaments and oratories were created, medical advances and huge business deals that have changed the course of history have all been conducted. All of these advances, of course, were not due to the coffee, but are perhaps indebted to it.

But a coffee isn't just a coffee. The world loves it, for good reason.

Much like wine, coffee takes special preparation. Like wine it takes dedication and specialized processes and cultivation, although it is the antithesis to wine. Wine will relax the body and tends to slow mental processes. This isn't the case with coffee. Coffee calms rather than intoxicates. Coffee stimulates the senses rather than dulling them. As the famous line goes, "It cheers the spirit without making one mad."

And like wine, coffee needs blending, brewing and the various other preparations that go with excellent drinks. Coffee also has its own vocabulary. To be truly familiar with coffee here are some of its more notable terms:

**Coffee Acidity #** Carrots and coffee has nearly the same pH. Acidity in coffee contributes to its special liveliness, color and brightness.

**Coffee Arabica #** Arabica is one of the primary types of coffee. The other is Robusta. Coffee Arabica contains less caffeine, but it is harder to cultivate as it grows best at altitudes between 3,500 to 7,000 feet. It has a superior full bodied taste compared to Robusta and is consequently more expensive.

**Bourbon** is a variety of coffees Arabica grown in Africa. Its cultivation was not seriously pursued for some time because, although it has more character and taste, it does not yield as large a crop as the other Arabica varieties. With the current popularity of coffee, however, its cultivation has risen in popularity.

**Coffee Blends #** Blending coffee is much like artists mixing colors on their palettes. Coffee blenders take beans grown from various coffee growing regions, mix them to craft a taste that is special and cannot be achieved with coffee of single origin.

**Body #** Pertains to the "feel" of coffee in the mouth. The body of the coffee could feel light, delicate, thin, syrupy or buttery.

**Decaffeinating / Decaf #** is the process of minimizing the caffeine content of the coffee beans. Several processes could be utilized to remove the caffeine content. One method uses chemicals; another makes use of different water processes and lastly is the use of carbon dioxide. In all decaffeinating process, the chief concern is to preserve the natural flavor of the coffee bean.

**Coffee Grade #** is a classification of the beans by their density and size. The highest grade is known as premium and is sold at a higher price.

**Processing #** is the separation of the flesh from the bean. The two types of processing are the dry and washed processes. With dry processing, the cherries are spread across the ground to dry out in the sun. The beans are raked several times each day so that drying is even. After two to three weeks, the dried flesh cracks off of the bean. Dry processing produces an earthy flavor and a syrupy texture in your coffee. The washed processing is a method of cutting the skin off the coffee bean and allowing it to stand so that it ferments until the skin can be easily washed off with water. After that step, the beans are dried. This kind of processing sustains the natural flavors in the coffee.

So now that you have a grasp of some of coffee's vocabulary, don't neglect to get your daily dose!