

IS COFFEE YOUR WHOLE PERSONALITY?

With coffee machine sales through the roof and a new artisan bean for each day of the week, a generation is turning into obsessive home baristas. Allow us to enable your habit...

"I'LL OFTEN HOVER OVER A BARISTA"

Writer Jessica Salter charts her journey from milky cap-
lover to full-blown espresso snob

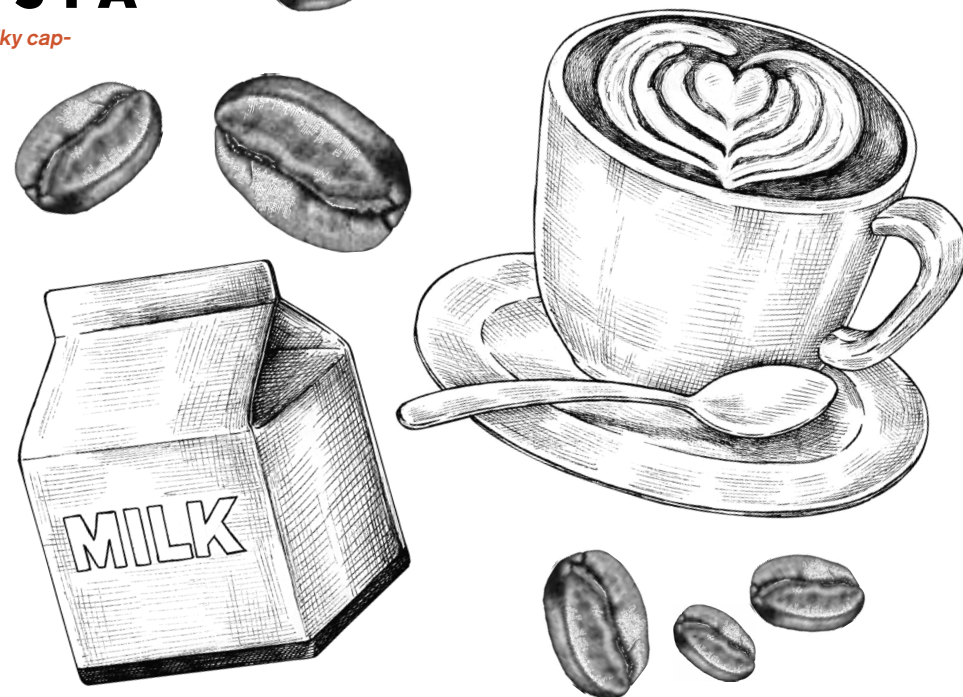


Every morning I creep downstairs in the dark, very careful not to wake anyone. I boil the kettle to warm my favourite mug (a ceramic Monoware one with just the right curves for my hands), weigh out exactly 25g of beans to grind and turn on

my coffee machine, ready to make that first sacred cup of the day. With only the half-light from the street lamps illuminating my kitchen, I clutch my coffee and breathe in that glorious smell before I take the sip I've been thinking about since the minute I opened my eyes. It's a ritual that feels almost illicit.

Like so many of us, I *really* love coffee. It's been a love affair that, like all the best romances, has deepened over time: where once I nursed frothy cappuccinos, now I take it short and black so I can really appreciate the taste. That's the romantic view, anyway. My husband just thinks I'm a snob when I request a double espresso with hot water in a jug at restaurants, or take my Aeropress (a portable coffee maker, something I don't need to explain to true aficionados) with me whenever I'm visiting his parents. Soon, I see myself going the extra mile like stylist Eleanor Cording-Booth, who forgoes extra clothes when she travels so she can pack her grinder, coffee scales and Kalita Wave dripper.

I've often hovered uncomfortably over baristas to check they're making my coffee just the way I want it while my husband waits outside because he can't bear the awkwardness. A few months ago, I took matters into my own hands and bought myself the true status symbol of 2023 (forget a car or an investment bag in this economy) – a proper coffee machine. I'm now the proud owner of a Sage Barista Pro (£649.95), which has a grinder built in, but connoisseurs (aka my friend Stephen Morrissey, COO at the Specialty Coffee



Association) say that really you need a separate grinder. It allows you even more control over the taste of your coffee, with a finer grind dialling down bitterness in the beans. I've got a Mahlkönig X45 (£499) on my Christmas dream-on list.

Being a home barista has been life changing: just-as-I-like-it coffee on tap, without spending the best part of a fiver each time. In my pantry is a row of millennial pink Grind tins (£9.99 for two packs a month) for my daily cup, as well as speciality coffee for when I want a treat.

Devotees like me are multiplying: sales of coffee machines are estimated at £162.8m this year, according to the World Coffee Portal, and John Lewis reported a rise of 26% in November alone. Once I've had my personal limit of 3-4 cups a day (studies show that drinking between 3-5 is good for your health, I'll have you know) I get

"FORGET A CAR OR AN INVESTMENT BAG – A COFFEE MACHINE IS THE TRUE STATUS SYMBOL OF 2023"

my virtual hit: #coffee has more than 70bn views on TikTok. Who among us hasn't enjoyed the satisfying pour of latte art, or hung off every post of coffee influencer Asia Lui Chapa aka @ac_homecafe, who makes a milk swirl look like magic?

Ultimately, though, that furtive morning cup alone is still my most treasured. As I start to hear stirrings of little people upstairs, I breathe in the final aromatic whiff, savour the last few sips and start dreaming of my next dawning brew.



DE'LONGHI LA SPECIALISTA ARTE

Jon Townsend, founder of The Institute Of Coffee, uses the De'Longhi La Specialista Arte at home and swears by it for functionality without faff. "It has some extremely useful tools to help with your espresso preparation and the results are top-notch," he says. There's a built-in grinder with eight settings, plus temperature control. Townsend doesn't believe you need to spend a fortune: "Using high-quality coffee (I'm a fan of washed Kenyan beans) and filtered water are the most important ways to get the best out of any machine". (£529.99, [delonghi.com](https://www.delonghi.com))



SAGE THE BAMBINO

Heidi Philip-Smith, award-winning latte artist and trainer at London School Of Coffee, has tried her hand with plenty of machines. "The Sage range is really reliable, and they have options whether you want something automatic or a bit more hands-on," she says. "The Bambino is ideal for those of us who want top-tier coffee at home but don't have huge kitchens." It's worth noting that it doesn't have a built-in grinder, so Philip-Smith recommends investing in a free-standing burr or a manual one. (£329.95, [sageappliances.com/uk](https://www.sageappliances.com/uk))

MACHINE LEARNING

If you're going to drop your disposable income on a coffee machine, you want to be sure it's *The One*. We asked the experts what they use at home



CAFÉ AFFETTO AUTOMATIC

Lani Kingston – culinary researcher, manager of Coffee Fest and author of *How To Make Coffee* and *Spill The Beans* – uses a Vietnamese phin filter when she wants to spend a bit of time and effort brewing, and the Café Affetto Automatic Espresso Machine + Frother for a high-tech, barista-level experience. "It's great when you're in a rush to get to your desk," she says, referencing the five-level built-in burr grinder and smart app you can use to customise your order from your phone: espresso, lungo or americano. (£616, [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk))



DE'LONGHI STILOSA

If you don't follow Asia Lui Chapa (@ac_homecafe) on Instagram yet, you're missing a trick. The influencer and author of *The Home Café* creates beautiful, caffeinated content of everything from brown sugar pear macchiatos to salted maple affogatos. And it's her affordable De'Longhi Stilosa machine that she trusts. "I use it every day," says Chapa, who appreciates the level of customisation it offers in an affordable and compact package. "It's easy to navigate, even if you're new to making coffee." (£126.99, [delonghi.com](https://www.delonghi.com))

THE KIT LIST

These are the accessories you need to take your home-brewing station to the next level

THE GRINDER

Kane Statton, head of coffee at Kiss The Hippo, swears by his Wilfa Svart Aroma Precision Coffee Grinder. "It's a stellar entry-level piece that lets you grind beans fresh, which is key to a great-tasting cup," he says. With five grind settings and a UV filter to protect beans from sunlight, it's all about preserving flavour. (£135, [wilfa.co.uk](https://www.wilfa.co.uk))



THE JUG

Trained baristas spend months learning how to spot when milk is steamed to perfection by eye, but this Sage Temp Control Milk Jug is a smart shortcut. A built-in thermometer allows you to easily see when the milk hits the sweet spot of 55-62°C – then 'polish' it by tapping the jug on a surface to remove large air bubbles. (£25.95, [johnlewis.com](https://www.johnlewis.com))



THE FROTHER

When you ask the experts about free-standing frothers, the Nespresso Aeroccino 4 repeatedly comes up trumps. If your machine doesn't have a steam wand and you want that silky feel, this can create airy bubbles for cappuccinos, dense froth for macchiatos or cold microfoam for iced lattes. (£89, [nespresso.com](https://www.nespresso.com))



THE CUP

Created with barista expertise, this cup is designed to help your milk penetrate from underneath the espresso as you pour, for a perfectly blended latte. The ceramic is a great insulator to keep your drink hot, while the wide rim is ideal for taking in the all-important aromas as you sip. (£25, [ty-ceramics.co.uk](https://www.ty-ceramics.co.uk))



THE BEST OF THE BLENDS

Like wine, it can take years to find your favourite coffee flavour profile, but these are the bags worth trying first

BLANK STREET BLANK BLEND

A medium roast of beans from Brazil, Honduras and Ethiopia, with stone fruit, almond, dark chocolate and caramel flavours. (£11, [blankstreet.com](https://www.blankstreet.com))



ROASTING PLANT MEXICAN SINGLE ORIGIN

Produced by indigenous women in Veracruz, this coffee has a mild, sweet aftertaste of honey-roasted peanut butter. (£9.75, [roastingplant.co.uk](https://www.roastingplant.co.uk))



RIDE & GRIND KENYA KIAMABARA PB

These fruity beans come in a reusable tin designed to keep them extra fresh. Expect hints of blackcurrant and mango. (£14, [harveynichols.com](https://www.harveynichols.com))



REDEMPTION ROASTERS THE BLOCK

A roastery housed inside HMP The Mount, providing training and jobs for prisoners. This blend is full-bodied and chocolatey. (£8.90, [reDEMPTIONROASTERS.COM](https://www.reDEMPTIONROASTERS.COM))



NEW GROUND BIG HOUSE

Complex and balanced, this seasonal blend is slightly nutty and slightly fruity. An unmatched way to start the day. (£9.50, [coffeehit.co.uk](https://www.coffeehit.co.uk))

