

How I Learned to Love Manual Coffee Brewing

Once upon a time, coffee was just another beverage. I enjoyed the taste and the smell, but I wasn't particular about the creation process. My entire adult life, I have owned several auto drip coffee makers for coffee brewing. And that might have been the end of this particular story if it hadn't been for one crucial Fathers Day.

What Took so Long?

Let's take a small step back. Like many others, I can waste hours shopping on Amazon. It has everything! And I enjoy adding items to the cart as I peruse at a leisurely pace (click, click, click). So it was no surprise that my wife often found coffee related products dangling on the edge of another purchase. And, anything I don't buy today is "saved for later." Because you never know, right?

There are probably a half dozen French Presses, a few electric kettles, and at least one espresso machine in that list somewhere. In my mind, none of that mattered unless I had a proper coffee grinder. Not any cheap grinder though, I needed a fully customizable burr grinder to one day make my own cold brew on a coarse setting or espresso by pulverizing the beans into powder.

I could never pull the trigger on just one grinder. Plus, a quality grinder wasn't cheap. So, for years, they just accumulated in the cart as a pipe dream.

Change is in the Air

I started a new job a few years back. The people there are great, and the coffee and sodas are all a perk of the job (not bad). An auto drip coffee maker is always on hand in the kitchen, ready to pour a measure of rich brew. The coffee was decent, and I never complained.

Not long after I started, I noticed that a select few coworkers brought in their own beans and grind them fresh every day. Not only that, but they had a French Press and a couple pour over devices stored in the cabinets that they would use to create their brew.

I jokingly asked if their coffee was really that much better than what was in the community pot. I quickly realized I had stirred a bee's nest. For the next five minutes, I received a crash course on the dark arts of manual coffee brewing. These guys were passionate and offered to brew me a fresh cup using a pour over on the spot.

I observed as my new friend added the beans to the grinder and crushed them into a suitable texture. Then, he added the grounds into the pour over on top of my borrowed coffee mug. He

started a timer, added enough water to saturate the grounds, and then waited for the bloom to complete.

He waited until the coffee had finished blooming before adding more hot water. The pour over was filled to the top, and then the water slowly proceeded down into the mug below.

Finally, my coffee mentor hands me the warm mug with a bit of a grin on his face. All he says is, "Here ya go, bud," knowing that I was in for a treat.

That first sip blew me away. All my life, I was under the perception that coffee was dark and bitter, and the only way to get past that was to either "man up" or diffuse it with dairy and sugar. I had no idea how fresh ground beans brewed at the proper temperature and time could make a difference.

The Wait

I was hooked! I had to get one of those pour over devices for myself, as well as a coffee grinder. So I informed my wife, and she smiled and nodded and then changed the subject to carry on with the day.

My regular home coffee had fallen behind compared to what I could produce at the workplace. I pitched in a few dollars to the guys, and they shared their beans with me. At the office, I learned the proper grind setting and how to pour a decent brew. But on weekends, I was left to use my auto drip machine and pre-ground coffee. I did begin to buy better pre-ground coffee, but it still didn't quite compare.

The Day Arrives

I am a terrible gift-giver. And I don't particularly appreciate being forced to buy gifts on holidays and special occasions. I would much rather spoil my wife and kids on the spot when the urge takes me. Because of that, my wife never has the perfect Mother's Day gifts (sorry, honey).

So, when Father's Day rolls around, I always tell her not to get me anything in the hopes that it will even things out a bit. She never listens, and she's a great gift giver (opposites do attract).

About a week until Father's Day, the doorbell rings to let us know a package has arrived. I take it inside and discover that it's addressed to me. But I hadn't ordered anything recently. My wife appears and sees me holding the box with a puzzled look on my face. She smiles and asks, "Do you want your Father's Day present early?" There is really only one answer to that question, "Of course!" I say.

I whip out my pocket knife and carefully cut away the tape. As I peel back the box flaps, I see the product label shining up at me "Burr Coffee Grinder." I was floored. Not only did she get me exactly what I wanted, she had played it cool for months, pretending to be disinterested in manual coffee brewing so she could surprise me.

I'm a lucky guy! Not only do I have the most incredible wife on the planet, but I would now be able to brew amazing coffee at home.

Where It All Began

I immediately hopped online and ordered a ceramic Hario V60 pour over device (It was already "Saved for later") and a digital gooseneck kettle. Waiting two whole days for shipping was torture, but I managed.

The next few weeks were bliss. I learned more manual brewing techniques and discovered how to craft a reliable brew with fresh roasted beans from a local roaster in town. I probably watched a dozen videos about pour over brewing techniques, and I tried them all.

It didn't stop there. I needed more. Shortly after, I had a Moka Pot and an [AeroPress](#) by my side. Both are great for making strong espresso like coffee. So it was time to try my hand at being a home barista. I had a small French Press style milk frother that came with my auto drip machine, which made excellent foamy milk. Soon I was making cappuccinos and cortados. I even tried my hand at some latte art (I failed miserably).

Now and Forever More

I can't even imagine how my life would have been if manual coffee brewing wasn't a part of it now. It's not that the automatic machine is terrible, but manual brewing offers so much more control over your brew. I have been able to explore the flavor profiles of so many unique roasts and expand my palate.

My manual coffee setup is constantly growing, but that Hario V60 is still my go-to brewing method. It's a journey, but one that I'm excited to continue for years to come!

One of my favorite pastimes is visiting local coffee roasters on vacation and talking to them about their beans and why they decided to get into the coffee business. I take pride in knowing that when I buy a bag to take home, I will be able to brew it to its full potential.

For More:

- On our site: Take a look at more of our articles about [coffee](#).

-All photos by Kris Silvey who runs his own website, [ElevatedCoffeeBrew](#).