

How to Make Lattes Without an Espresso Machine

Okay. You've just fallen out of bed and you need that jolt of caffeine pumped into your system in order to start your day. You slept in so running to the coffee shop on the way to the office is out of the question. Besides, you're trying to break that \$4.00 habit anyway. So, why not make this morning the start of a new habit? You could just make your own latte at home. Sure, the idea sounds pretty good bouncing around in your head until you realize you don't have an espresso machine. That's okay. There is a way to get around that and I'll show you how.

I'm a coffee geek, a little on the snobbish side, so if I were to give you my best advice, I'd recommend you to buy an espresso machine and a grinder. Instead of that, I'll teach you how to make a great approximation of that \$4.00 drink, using inexpensive items in your kitchen.

Step 1 – The Coffee



You've got coffee somewhere in your kitchen or pantry, right? Hopefully it's not instant and that it's not ground coffee. All you need to do while you are waiting for your toaster to gently singe the bread you shoved into it moments ago is to make coffee as you normally would. If you use a percolator, plunger or drip machine, get on it right away. The stronger the coffee is – dark roast would pretty much rock right about now – the better for you.

The Coffee Maker

We're making assumptions here. If you don't have an espresso machine we figured you would have one of the many other inexpensive alternatives cluttering up counter space with empty pizza

boxes and dirty dishes. Before we dig further into the process to make a latte at home without an espresso machine, let's review the alternative coffee making appliances. Nod your head when you find the one that you are using.

Alternative Coffee Machine 1 – The Drip Coffee Maker



They are called drip coffee makers not because they leak all over your counter. In fact, the dripping part is related to the way the coffee is brewed. You start with grinding the beans you need for as many cups as necessary. Use a decent grinder and not some crazy blade grinder that can destroy your beans instead of gently grinding them to a pulp. You spill the amount of ground coffee into a filter (or built-in filter) and load into the port above the exit point of the water. Then you fill the machine's water reservoir with water, turn the contraption on and once the water is heated to the right temperature it is pumped into the same location as the ground beans. The water seeps through and drips into your cup or a carafe in the form of perfectly brewed coffee. If you own that machine, all this is a routine for you. There is just one slight change from your regular drip brewing routine: make that coffee concentrated. Just use double the coffee grounds you normally would, and you have the base for your latte.

Alternative Coffee Machine 2 – French Press

This is a (usually) glass container that you fill with your freshly pulverized coffee beans and then add hot water. The lid to this unit will have a built-in plunger-type press with a filter in it. You slowly press down on the plunger as if you were about to detonate a blast of dynamite in the building next door. By the time the filter reaches the bottom of the container, hot water has been squeezed through the ground beans and you'll end up with a smokin' hot cup of joe.

On a serious note, French press coffee is much more appropriate for a latte. Coffee from a French press is stronger than drip. You know that muddy look and feel of a French press? You want that in your latte. We baristas call that strength TDS (total dissolved solids).

Alternative Coffee Machine 3 – Moka Pot

Moka pot is my favorite espresso brewing alternative. Partly because the brewer has an interesting design. It somewhat resembles a stealth bomber in that there are no rounded edges and well, to us it looks like one. The pot uses steam pressure to brew coffee. You basically add water, add your freshly ground coffee and sit the thing on your stovetop. Once heated, the water inside the Moka pot produces steam that extracts the flavor from the ground beans. You could call it the poor man's espresso machine. Some call it stove top espresso maker. We call it magical.

Coffee brewed in a Moka pot resembles a lot espresso. The reason is the pressure used during brewing. This is hands down the best espresso alternative.



Step 2 – The Milk

You better have some milk in the fridge. We're assuming that on the mornings you don't indulge in toast are the ones when you eat your Lucky Charms drowning in milk while flipping through the Funny Pages of the paper. Hopefully you saved enough milk in the carton for this morning's latte. With a saucepan on your stovetop, pour in some milk. Set the burner on medium heat and listen for your toaster to spit out breakfast as you prepare for the next step. The microwave oven is a great option. Since the temperature for steaming milk is between 150°F - 155°F, you need to figure a way to time the heating. The best option to steam milk cheaply is the microwave. It's not technically steaming, because you are not pumping in steam, as you do with the steaming wand of an espresso machine. But it works decently, and if you measure the milk and time the heating properly, you'll get that sweetness from the cooked lactose. Make sure you don't overheat your milk, or you'll burn it.

Step 3 – The Foam

Here's where the job gets a bit tricky and why you pay so much more for a latte at the coffee shop. You are about to add some texture to that milk, and create some foam to add to your creation. This is a must. But in order to do that you need some form of whipping/mixing apparatus. A whisk can work; an immersion mixer with a whisk is even better.

If you have one of those cheap devices specially designed to make your milk fluffy and creamy, you are a lucky person. Those are really nice. Handheld milk frothers can help you get that perfect silky texture of your milk. My absolutely favorite is the Aeroccino, but you have to commit to your newfound hobby if you want to buy one of those. Heck, creative people found a way to [froth milk in a jar](#). (That's right, use a simple Mason jar and a microwave to make perfect frothy milk, as described in this linked story by Emma Christensen.)

Here is what you need to do: As the milk gets hotter in the saucepan, mix it to create foam. The faster you whisk or mix, the longer lasting the foam will be.



Step 4 – The Process

The coffee should be ready by now. Since your toast is cooling you have time to pour yourself a cup of coffee. Use your favorite mug and fill about a third with coffee. The other two thirds are for the steamed/frothed milk. Pour some of the milk from the pan and then spoon some of the foam over the top of your latte. The foam, if it is firm enough when you added it, will hold sugar for a few seconds before letting it sink into your mug of coffee. You can also decorate it using stencils and cocoa powder or cinnamon.



Did You Get That?

We know. The word espresso means ‘fast!’ or ‘on-the-double’ or ‘quick service’ but that is not normally the case when you find yourself standing in line at the coffee shop. So, to save you a little bit of time and a whole lot of frustration, we have shared with you our surefire, oft-tested and imitated recipe for making your own latte at home without the assistance of an ‘on-the-double’ espresso machine. But can you do it? If it means saving four bucks a pop and breaking that habit, of course you can. You can do anything you put your mind to. To help you through the process, we will include a list of ingredients and tools needed to carry out the job with minimal supervision.



Equipment and Ingredients

The drink part requires:

- Coffee, fresh beans or close to it (dark roast is best)
- Coffee grinder for turning the whole coffee beans into ground coffee beans
- Milk, before the expiration date on the carton and enough for a couple of cups
- Sugar, enough to sprinkle on the foam for looks and flavor

The equipment you'll need:

- Coffee machine (percolator, French press, drip style, Moka Pot)
- Coffee cup or mug
- Saucepan, medium sized
- Stovetop (or some other heat source, you could do this camping on a campfire, too)
- Stirring tool (whisk, handheld mixer)
- Spoon (to scoop off foam to add to your drink)

In Conclusion

As the snobby coffee head that I am, I'd recommend you to get a real espresso machine and start your home barista career properly. You can even find some decently priced ones, if the budget is a problem. But that's not why I am writing this.

MacGyver taught us that with a little ingenuity and some guts, we can make just about anything we need to survive or solve a mystery. Your only limitation is your imagination and the access you have to nuts and bolts and assorted other items that become the tools of the trade. When it comes to the morning kick start all habitual coffee drinkers crave, there is no getting around the fact that a caffeine fix is the only way to get through the morning. Provided you have the right pieces of the puzzle, you can create the latte of your dreams in the comfort of your own kitchen, tent or RV. While it may not impress too many of your friends, it will save you at least \$4.00 and a long wait in line for something being made on a machine with the word 'fast' in its name. By the way, you're welcome.

For More:

- Coffee Brewing Methods, <http://www.coffee-brewing-methods.com/>
- Emma Christensen, [How to Froth Milk For Cappuccinos in a Microwave](#)
- On our site: [AeroPress: A Great Cup of Coffee on the Road](#)