

## Why Is Ordering Coffee So Complicated?

*Our expert breaks down the lingo and explains what all those choices mean*

**As a CIA agent,** “Richard Smart” cracks complex enemy codes and foils terrorist plots. For fun, Dick memorizes telephone books...backwards.

So why do Dick’s knees turn to Jell-O when he tries to order a coffee drink from his neighborhood coffeehouse?

“I-I-I just want a regular coffee,” stammers Dick. “Do you have that? Do you have just regular coffee?”

“Why, nothing’s ‘regular’ at Deja Brew!” exclaims the perky blonde *barista*, ready to share her extensive knowledge. “Today, we’re featuring Guatemala Huehuetenango, a medium-bodied varietal with lovely berry and chocolate notes. Or perhaps you’d prefer our signature house coffee, a blend of Tanzania Peaberry, Columbia Supremo, and Ethiopia Yergacheffe.”

Dick hears the employee’s words, but they have no meaning to him. And he hasn’t even asked about the espresso beverages yet. Nor does he ever intend to.

In the old days, a cup of joe was a cup of joe. Now, it’s a cup of Joseph—so intimidating. But there is hope. In my never-ending attempt to simplify things for coffee drinkers—and, not so coincidentally, to encourage more customers to try all that Brew Ha Ha! has to offer—the following is my guide to Everything You Wanted to Know About Ordering Coffee Drinks But Were Afraid to Ask.

The biggest challenge for most people is ordering espresso drinks. First, you need to know that a perfectly pulled shot of espresso is the foundation of all espresso-based drinks. If you’re a coffee purist, you’ll probably like it served as a stand-alone beverage, as the Italians do. In this country, most espresso is combined with milk to make cappuccinos and lattes.



Latte art, which can be as simple as a heart shape or as intricate as the design above, is a signature touch added by baristas who prepare espresso-based drinks.

Next, let’s decipher the lingo of ordering an espresso drink so that you get what you want without feeling foolish. This is the time to ask yourself several questions:

**1. Do I like a predominantly coffee-flavored drink or do I prefer milk to be the predominant taste?** A cappuccino, made with milk stretched and textured to its maximum point, then poured quickly over espresso, is a light beverage with a predominant coffee taste.

A latte, made with milk that is lightly textured to a smooth, velvety finish, then poured slowly over the espresso, is a heavier beverage dominated by the taste of milk. You can also add more espresso to your cappuccino or latte than is offered in the standard drink to get a stronger coffee taste.

**2. Do I like a drink that has flavors other than coffee and milk?** If you prefer some sweetness with your coffee, you may want to

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What's Brewing —

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ask for a mocha cappuccino or latte, which has a shot of rich chocolate. You can also choose from a variety of flavored syrups, such as hazelnut, raspberry, and caramel, to add individually or in combination with your espresso drink.

**3. Do I like hot drinks or cold ones?** Most espresso beverages can be served hot or poured over ice for a cool, refreshing treat.

**4. Do I like a smaller drink or a bigger one?** Espresso drinks come in sizes ranging from a 1- or 2-oz. espresso to 12-, 16-, or 20-oz. lattes and cappuccinos (short, tall, and extra-tall at Brew Ha Ha!).

A good barista will look into your glazed eyes as you're staring at the menu board and ask probing questions about your coffee likes and dislikes—assuming there's not a line of customers out the door. You tell him or her that you like the taste of coffee, but you don't like it too strong. You like your drink hot. You have a bit of a sweet tooth, it's 3 p.m. and you're jonesing for a chocolate fix. You're watching your calories, though, so you don't want a huge drink. The barista might recommend a short mocha latte, and give you the option of making your drink with either regular or skim milk.

At many coffee shops, including Brew Ha Ha!, the standard cappuccinos and lattes are fully caffeinated, served hot, and are made with whole milk. If you want decaf, iced, a different milk choice (2 percent, skim, or soy), or extra shots of espresso or flavored syrups, you simply specify these when ordering.

When you order, first state the drink size—short, tall, or extra tall. Next, if you want a drink made with something other than whole milk, specify the milk choice—2 percent, skinny, or soy milk. If you want decaf or iced—now is the time to say so. Ditto if you want extra espresso shots or flavor shots in your drink. Finally, state your drink of choice—cappuccino, latte, mocha cappuccino, etc. And don't worry if you don't get your order exactly right at first. There's another language spoken in coffee shops other than coffee-ese. It's known as “English.” You and your barista should be able to figure things out.

I think you're beginning to understand why people feel ordering espresso drinks is so complicated—we're offering our customers a lot of choices. Your order can be as simple as “tall latte,” if you want a latte made with hot, whole milk and two shots of espresso (by far the most popular drink at Brew Ha Ha!). Or, it can be as complicated as a short, skinny decaf, triple, iced vanilla latte.

Let's fast-forward several months. Dick, recently divorced, and the perky blonde *Deja Brew* employee—never married—strike up a friendship. The short, skinny, decaf iced latte is now Dick's favorite drink.

He reaches the front of the line and the blonde *barista* approaches. “What'll it be, Dick?” she asks.

“The usual,” he says. “A short, skinny, decaf, iced latte. Oh, and can you make it with a medium-bodied varietal with lovely berry and chocolate notes?”

“I love it when you talk like that,” she says.

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## Coffee Talk

A glossary of some of popular Brew Ha Ha! drinks, defined in plain English

**Espresso** is a highly concentrated coffee beverage as well as the foundation for a variety of espresso-based drinks such as cappuccinos, lattes, and mocha lattes. Espresso is brewed by forcing hot water under high pressure through finely ground coffee. Espresso contains approximately twice the caffeine content per volume as regular brewed coffee, or approximately 40 milligrams per fluid ounce, but only about one-third of the content per serving.

**Cappuccino** is an Italian coffee-based drink prepared with espresso and hot milk. A cappuccino is traditionally served in a ceramic cup, which retains heat better than paper. In making a cappuccino, the milk is stretched and textured to its maximum point and then poured quickly over top of the espresso. The result is a light beverage that harmoniously combines espresso and milk.

**Latte** is espresso with lightly textured milk. The milk should be poured slowly over the espresso, creating a velvety smooth texture throughout the drink. The drink should be milky sweet with the presence of coffee. Finish with latte art.

**Latte art** refers to designs created on the top of espresso-based drinks by a barista.

**Café Mocha** is a cafe latte with a shot of dark chocolate. A variant is a white café mocha, made with a shot of white chocolate syrup.

**Mochachino** is the Mocha Latte's big brother, topped with whipped cream and chocolate shavings.

**Americano** is a style of coffee prepared by adding espresso to hot water, giving it a similar strength but different flavor than regular drip coffee. (The strength of any Americano can be varied by increasing the number of shots of espresso added.)

**Brewski** is drip coffee with one or more shots of espresso.

**Chai** is the most commonly ordered beverage at Brew Ha Ha! that does not contain coffee. Originally from the Himalayas, chai is a combination of tea, honey, vanilla, ginger, and textured milk to produce a wonderfully creamy, spicy beverage. However, espresso is a great addition!

Not a commonly ordered drink, but the owner's favorite:

**Macchiato** is espresso with a tiny bit of textured milk. Espresso is pulled directly into a pre-heated demitasse cup topped with free-poured, textured milk to a volume of no more than 4 oz. In the United States, a macchiato can take several forms, ranging from the traditional Italian style described above (this is the preferred style used by Brew Ha Ha!) to a Latte macchiato, which contains a large volume of milk and a shot poured over the top.



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