

ANTONIO'S COFFEE JOURNEY

The Moka Course

Understand, brew, and adjust moka coffee: a general guide to variables, taste, and cup diagnosis.

This guide is not built around one magic recipe. It is built to teach you how to read what happens inside a moka pot: flow, water, grind size, roast level, body, sweetness, acidity, and bitterness.

METHOD

EXTRACTION

DIAGNOSIS

DIAGRAMS

A practical guide in a technical diary style - warm, simple, and precise.

How to use this course

The moka pot is sensitive. A small change in water, grind size, distribution, or heat can completely change the cup.

Skill is not memorising one recipe. Skill is knowing what to adjust after tasting.

1. Foundations

How the moka pot works and why it is not espresso.

2. Preparation

Dose, water, grind size, distribution, and heat.

3. Variables

How each lever changes intensity, extraction, body, and clarity.

4. Diagnosis

What to do when the cup is sour, bitter, weak, rough, or not sweet enough.

5. Practical diagrams

Mental maps, tables, and decision flows.

6. Training

How to run clean tests and build your own recipe.

Module 1 - What the moka pot really is

The moka pot is not espresso. It is a moderate-pressure brewing method: water in the boiler heats up, steam creates pressure, and that pressure pushes water through the coffee bed and into the upper chamber.

Water Controls how much extraction can happen and how long the beverage will be.	Coffee Density, roast level, grind size, and distribution decide the resistance.	Heat Generates pressure, changes the flow, and influences extraction quality.
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A moka pot can produce short and intense coffee, or a longer and lighter cup; sweet and round, or bitter and aggressive. The difference comes from how you control the variables.

Diagram 1 - The four qualities to control

Intensity How concentrated the beverage feels. It increases with less water, more dose, finer grind, paper filter, or shorter yield.	Extraction How much of the coffee is dissolved. It increases with more water, more time, more heat, finer grind, and paper filter.
Clarity How clean, smooth, and readable the cup is. It improves with good distribution, regular flow, and paper filtration.	Body The tactile sensation in the mouth. It depends on concentration, oils, dissolved solids, extraction, and filtration.

Module 2 - A recipe is not a law

There is no universal recipe that works perfectly with every coffee. A recipe is a starting point. After that, you taste, describe, and adjust.

Golden rule: change one variable at a time. If you change grind size, water, dose, and heat together, you will not know which change improved or damaged the cup.

Parameter	What it controls	Why you should note it
Coffee dose	How much coffee is in the basket	Influences intensity, resistance, and body
Water in the boiler	The brewing volume	More water extracts more; less water concentrates and shortens
Grind size	Surface area and resistance	The most immediate lever for acidity or bitterness
Heat	Pressure, flow, temperature	Changes cup quality, not only speed
Yield	Beverage obtained	Shows how long or short the real brew is
Taste	The final result	The main judge

Diagram 2 - The learning cycle

1 Prepare a base recipe.

Measure coffee and water, distribute well, manage heat.



2 Observe the flow.

Is it regular, fast, slow, violent, pale, or sputtering?



3

Taste.

Sour? Bitter? Weak? Sweet? Rough? Balanced?



4

Adjust one variable.

Only one. Then repeat the cycle.

Module 3 - Basket, dose, and distribution

The moka basket works more by volume than by weight. The same basket can hold fewer grams of dark roast and more grams of light roast.

Dark roast

Less dense, more expanded, and lighter for the same volume. Be careful not to overfill the basket.

Light roast

Denser and heavier in the same basket volume. It may require more energy and more extraction.

Do not tamp like espresso. The moka needs an even bed, not a compressed puck. Excessive compression can create too much resistance, channeling, and pressure.

Distribution: the small gesture that changes everything

Uneven distribution creates denser and emptier zones. Water flows where it finds less resistance: this causes channeling. The result can be a cup that is sour and bitter at the same time.

- Use a dosing funnel if it helps you keep the basket clean and even.
- Use WDT or a thin needle to break clumps, especially with finer grinds.
- Give small taps to level the bed and remove air pockets.
- Do not intentionally compress the coffee.

The finer you grind, the more accurate distribution must be.

Module 4 - Grind size

Grind size controls two things: the surface area exposed to water and the resistance that water meets inside the basket.

If you grind...	You increase	You risk	When to do it
Finer	Extraction, intensity, sweetness, body, resistance	Bitterness, dryness, channeling, excessive pressure	Weak, watery, sour, not sweet enough
Coarser	Flow, control, less bitterness	Weak cup, thin body, sourness, short finish	Bitter, dry, too aggressive

Diagram 3 - Grind size and taste

Too coarse Weak, watery, sour, not sweet enough, short aftertaste.	Good zone Sweetness, body, readable aromatics, regular flow.
Too fine Dry, bitter, rough, high pressure, possible sputtering.	Correction Move in small steps. The moka pot reacts strongly to small differences.

Module 5 - Water in the boiler

The amount of water is one of the most powerful and underestimated variables. You do not always have to fill up to the valve: that is a safety limit, not a universal sensory recipe.

More water	Less water
Longer extraction	Shorter extraction
More beverage	More concentrated beverage
Can help light or medium roasts	Can help dark or bitter coffees
Risk: bitterness in the final part	Risk: too short or too sour if extraction is insufficient

Less water can give a stronger coffee with less bitterness.

This happens because you cut the tail of the extraction, which is often paler, more watery, bitter, and astringent. The first part is more concentrated and richer.

Module 6 - Roast level

Roast level changes coffee solubility. The darker the coffee, the easier it usually extracts. The lighter the coffee, the more it may need energy, water, or a finer grind.

Roast level	Tendency	Starting approach	Typical defect
Light	Less soluble	More water, finer grind, possible hot water or paper filter	High acidity, not enough sweetness
Medium	Flexible	Middle parameters, adjust by taste	Can move either sour or bitter
Dark	More soluble	Less water, slightly coarser grind, moderate heat, room-temperature water	Bitterness, dryness, harshness

Note on oily beans: a quality dark roast does not have to be shiny and oily. When oils come heavily to the surface, the coffee can oxidise and go stale faster.

Module 7 - Starting water temperature and heat

Heat does not only make coffee rise. It changes pressure, flow, and cup quality.

Room-temperature water

A gentler and more controlled approach. Often useful with dark roasts because it avoids pushing extraction too hard.

Hot water

Can help with light or medium roasts. It shortens the heat-up phase and gives more energy, but it can become more aggressive.

Heat management

As a general approach, start with medium or medium-high heat, then reduce when coffee begins to come out. The flow should be regular, not violent.

High heat	Low heat
Fast output, more aggressive pressure	Slow output, gentler extraction
Can create acidity, dryness, or imbalance if too violent	Can create more sweetness, but also a flat cup if there is not enough energy
Useful if the coffee is less soluble or too thin	Useful if the coffee is very soluble or tends to bitterness

Diagram 4 - Reading the flow



Ideal flow

Starts slowly, grows regularly, stays continuous, does not spit, and does not turn pale immediately.



Too fast

Possible causes: coarse grind, low dose, high heat, low resistance. Result: weak, sour, low body.

**Too slow or blocked**

Possible causes: fine grind, too much coffee, paper filter plus fine grind, heat too low. Risk: pressure, bitterness, sputtering.

When the flow becomes very pale, accelerates suddenly, or starts bubbling, the best part has often already come out. Turn off the heat or remove the moka pot.

Module 8 - Paper filter

An AeroPress-style paper filter can be placed above the metal filter of the moka pot. It is optional, but it is a powerful variable.

It cleans

It traps fines, sediment, and part of the oils. The cup becomes smoother and easier to read.

It adds resistance

It can increase pressure, contact time, yield, and extraction.

When it can help	When it can make things worse
Weak medium or light roast, not sweet enough, not intense enough	Dark coffee already bitter or dry
Rough cup with too much sediment	Grind already very fine
You want more clarity and smoothness	Flow already slow or moka pot already under high pressure

Paper filtration is not only filtration: it is also an extraction lever.

Module 9 - Cup diagnosis

This is the most practical part. Taste, describe the main defect, and choose a coherent correction.

In the cup you taste...	Probable cause	First correction	Second correction
Weak + sour	Under-extraction	Grind finer	Increase energy, try more water or paper filter
Bitter + dry	Over-extraction or aggressive extraction	Use less water	Grind coarser, lower heat, stop earlier
Good but light	Low concentration	Use less water	More dose or slightly finer grind
Intense but rough	Fines, sediment, or uneven extraction	Use paper filter	Improve distribution, grind a touch coarser
Not sweet enough	Incomplete extraction or poor extraction quality	Slow and regularise the flow	Grind slightly finer or increase energy
Does not work with milk	Base too diluted	Use less water	More dose, paper filter, shorter yield

Diagram 5 - Quick decision tree

1 Is the moka sour and weak?

Yes: grind finer. If that is not enough, increase energy or try a paper filter.

2 Is the moka bitter and dry?

Yes: use less water. If that is not enough, grind coarser and stop earlier.

3 Is the moka good but light?

Yes: reduce water or slightly increase dose. Search for more concentration, not necessarily more extraction.

4 Is the moka intense but muddy?

Yes: improve distribution and try a paper filter.

5 Is the moka good but not sweet?

Yes: work on flow quality. More TDS does not always mean better taste.

Module 10 - Starting recipes

These are not final recipes. They are thoughtful starting points.

Coffee type	Water	Grind	Heat	Paper filter	Goal
Light	Medium-high	Finer	Controlled medium	Possible	Extract sweetness without losing clarity
Medium	Medium	Medium-fine	Medium	Optional	Balance acidity, sweetness, and body
Dark	Lower	Slightly coarser	Moderate	Not at first	Intensity without dry bitterness
Milk base	Low	Finer but safe	Controlled	Often useful	High TDS, short yield, enough punch

Smart bypass: if a short moka brew tastes good but is too intense or too small, add hot water after brewing. It is better to dilute a good extraction than to over-extract by putting too much water in the boiler.

Module 11 - Training protocol

To really learn, choose one coffee and run three or four annotated tests. Do not search for perfection immediately: search for direction.

1 Base test.

Brew a normal moka pot and describe the main defect.

2 Targeted correction.

Change only one variable.

3 Comparison.

Is the cup sweeter, more bitter, more intense, cleaner?

4 Confirmation.

Repeat the best recipe to see whether it is stable.

Printable brew log

Field	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3
Coffee / roast			
Coffee dose			
Water in boiler			
Grind size			
Paper filter?			
Heat / power			
First coffee time			
End time			
Yield			
Taste			
Next correction			

Final cheat sheet

If it is weak and sour

Grind finer. Then consider more energy, more water, or paper filter.

If it is bitter and dry

Use less water. Then grind coarser, lower heat, or stop earlier.

If it is good but light

Reduce water, increase dose, or shorten the yield.

If it is rough

Improve distribution and try a paper filter.

If sweetness is missing

Search for a more regular flow and better extraction quality.

If it must work with milk

You need more concentration: less water, more dose, or paper filter.

The moka pot is adjusted by tasting: if it is weak, push; if it is bitter, shorten; if it is rough, clean; if it is flat, change the energy.