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COFFEE

**URNS OUT,
COFFEE IS
GOOD FOR YOU
AFTER ALL,
WITH SOME
DUBBING IT
"THE NEW RED
WINE." HERE'S
WHAT TO LOOK
FOR IN YOUR
NEXT BREW**

By Vera Tweed

Mention coffee, and caffeine is probably the first thing that comes to mind—the indispensable morning jolt often viewed as a guilty pleasure. But research is turning that notion on its head. Coffee, it turns out, may be the most beneficial of all our familiar beverages, and caffeine doesn't play the leading role.

A recent Harvard report noted these coffee benefits: lower blood pressure, a slower rate of weight gain with age, and reduced risks for type 2 diabetes and heart or neurological diseases. An NIH-sponsored study of 400,000 men and women, between the ages 50 and 71, found that those who drank three or more cups daily, with or without caffeine, were less likely to die from heart disease, respiratory disease, stroke, injuries and accidents, diabetes, and infections. Other studies have found that coffee reduces risk for various cancers, liver damage from overindulging in alcohol and food, and depression (caffeinated coffee specifically) among women.

BUZZ

A top-down photograph of two coffee cups on saucers. The cups are made of a dark, textured material, possibly ceramic or metal, and are filled with a dark coffee topped with a layer of foam. The saucers are a lighter, warm brown color. The background is a light-colored, textured surface, possibly a wall or a table, with a vertical line running down the center.

WHY IT'S GOOD FOR YOU

"Coffee is the new red wine, without the hangover," says Bob Arnot, MD, a popular TV medical correspondent and health book author who has tested hundreds of coffees from around the world. The health-boosting ingredients are antioxidants called chlorogenic acids. The name doesn't mean they're acidic, in the sense of upsetting your stomach; it's just a technical designation for a group of antioxidants in the polyphenol family of nutrients, found in all plant foods.

"These powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant compounds are the most important health components of coffee, just as they are in the freshest fruits and vegetables, fine red wines, and premium green teas," says Arnot. But given the way we eat, coffee is typically the top source of these nutrients in the American diet.

ALL COFFEES ARE NOT EQUAL


In testing coffees with high-tech lab tools (think back to *CSI* episodes with mass spectrometers), Arnot found that levels of chlorogenic acids could be dramatically higher—by a hundred times or more—in the healthiest coffees, maximizing their therapeutic qualities. And, he identified how to get the most antioxidants in a cup of java.

The bean:




Beans grown at higher elevations, rather than on low-lying flatlands, contain more chlorogenic acids and—lucky for us—more flavor. Ethiopian and Kenyan beans fall into this category, and higher-elevation beans from other areas also fit the bill. One way to identify them is by taste, and coffees, like fine wines, are reviewed and ranked by expert tasters. For coffee ratings, check out www.coffeereview.com.

The roast:



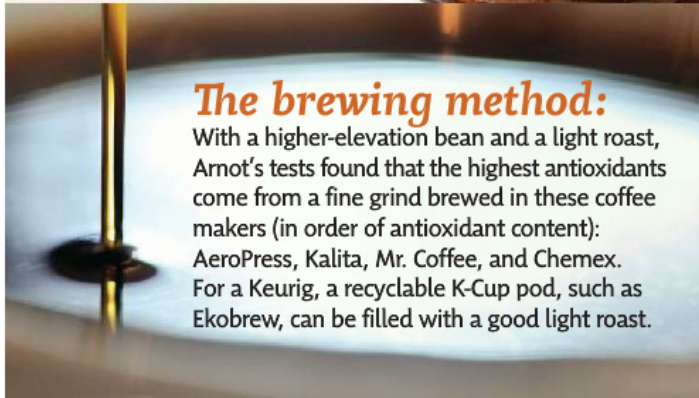
High temperatures required for dark roasts destroy chlorogenic acids. Light roasting at lower temperatures preserves more antioxidants and flavors.

The grind:




A fine grind enables more antioxidants to be extracted from the beans, because it exposes a greater surface area for water to penetrate.

The brewing method:




With a higher-elevation bean and a light roast, Arnot's tests found that the highest antioxidants come from a fine grind brewed in these coffee makers (in order of antioxidant content): AeroPress, Kalita, Mr. Coffee, and Chemex. For a Keurig, a recyclable K-Cup pod, such as Ekobrew, can be filled with a good light roast.


Coffee Buying Tips



Shade grown coffees are becoming more plentiful. Shade can be induced artificially, with a plastic-wrap-style covering, to promote yield, or can be natural from indigenous trees, enhancing the ecology of an area and creating different flavors in beans. Its effect on antioxidant content has not been widely researched, but one study in Thailand found that antioxidant levels were higher with natural, rather than artificial, shade.

To boost the antioxidants in your cup of joe, look for:

 **ARABICA BEANS:** Traditionally grown at higher elevations, these typically contain more antioxidants and less caffeine than Robusta beans, which are grown on low-lying, flat, industrial plantations and used in mass-market and instant coffees.

 **HIGHER ELEVATIONS:** Bean descriptions may include words like "mountain," or "hillside." Higher-altitude coffee likely comes from small, independent farms, supports local economies, and improves quality of life in coffee-growing regions.

 **LIGHT ROAST:** Look for light-colored beans.

HOW TO MAKE A COLD BREW

Iced coffee is simply hot coffee, chilled and served over ice. Cold brew never meets hot water and is gaining popularity as a more flavorful, cold black coffee drink. Recipes vary but these are the basic steps:



To avoid muddy coffee, use a very coarse grind and pure cold water.

The best ratio of coffee to water depends on your personal taste. Some examples are 8 parts water to 1 part coffee, or 4 ounces of coffee to 2 cups of water.

1. In a jar or jug, add coffee and then water, and stir gently to saturate grounds evenly.
2. Let sit for 12–24 hours, in or out of the fridge. Longer is better.
3. Strain with a filter and serve chilled or over ice.



THE FLAVOR MYTH

Although dark roasts are believed to have richer flavor, this is a myth. "There are 1,200 flavor components in coffee," says Arnot, and light roasting of higher-elevation beans brings these out, as sweetness, fruity flavors, hints of chocolate, and many more. "If you're drinking dark, burnt coffee, loaded up with cream and sugar," he adds, "Boy, do you have a treat in store."

PITFALLS TO AVOID

In the United States, two out of three coffee drinkers add sugar and/or cream, but dairy reduces the beneficial effects of coffee antioxidants, and sugar adds empty calories. And a study of a supermarket-style nondairy creamer found that it reduced antioxidant absorption from coffee by 30 percent. Although Arnot recommends drinking coffee black, he points out, "The polyphenols in coffee also decrease the untoward effect of high-fat and high-sugar meals, so you should still buy a coffee with very high antioxidants."

To adjust taste, he recommends:

- **If coffee is too bitter:** Use a coarser grind.
- **If it has a sour taste:** Use a finer grind.

For anyone who cannot tolerate caffeine, there's decaf. With or without caffeine, Arnot calls light-roast, high-elevation, flavorful black coffee "the healthiest new superfood we have."



How Much Coffee?

Studies show that coffee, with or without caffeine, delivers maximum benefits with 4 cups daily for women and 6 cups for men. According to a Gallup poll, on an average day, American adults drink:



COCONUT OIL COFFEE

There's something about the Paleo-friendly combination of coconut oil and unsalted butter that makes a cup of regular black coffee taste like a latte! It's a tasty way to get the benefits of coconut oil, known to promote healthy cholesterol (HDL) levels and reduce "bad" (LDL) cholesterol levels. Plus, butter contains zero lactose, so this is great for lactose-intolerant folks.

- 1 cup hot coffee
- 1 Tbs. coconut oil
- 1 Tbs. unsalted butter or ghee

Mix it all in a blender until frothy.

Vera Tweed has been writing about nutrition, fitness, and healthy living since 1997. She specializes in covering research and expert knowledge that empowers people to lead better lives. She is the author of numerous books, including Hormone Harmony and User's Guide to Carnitine and Acetyl-L-Carnitine.

SPILLING THE BEANS

COOL AND RANDOM FACTS ABOUT COFFEE!



In 1675, the King of England banned coffee houses, fearing they were encouraging treason.

Coffee causes acid reflux in an estimated 16 million people. Say it ain't so, Joe!



Hawaii is the only state in America able to grow coffee plants commercially.

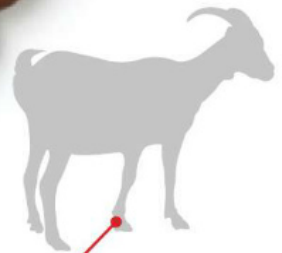
The most coffee consumption is 82 cups of coffee in seven hours, according to the *Guinness Book of Records*.



The "Americano" was named for American troops in World War II who ordered strong espressos at European shops and diluted them with hot water.



Espresso isn't a type of roast; it's a way of preparing coffee in which highly pressurized hot water is shot through finely ground coffee to extract the maximum flavor.



Coffee was discovered by goats. Actually, no one's exactly sure where or when coffee was discovered. But in one of the more fanciful legends, it was in Ethiopia, when a goat herder noticed his furry charges becoming unusually frisky after nibbling small red berries from a bush.

The average store carries more than 20 brands of coffee. And that's not counting the various blends and roasts within each brand.