

Picking the right home coffee machine.

Sean Edwards

Author of *Home Barista* and *The Home Coffee Machine Review*

Coffee is very much a lifestyle beverage and like life, it comes in many variations in its service and delivery. *The Home Coffee Machine Review* is aimed at showing people the science and art of coffee making for the beginner through to the coffee expert (Coffee Geek). There are many different levels of entry into home espresso coffee making and I am going to try and help you find your category, which should indicate what system suits you in this confusing market place. Please don't feel offended if I label you wrong, at the end of the day it is your choice what machine you buy and how much you want to spend.

Most of the machines we tested for the Home Coffee Machine Review worked well for what they have been designed to do. Buying a coffee machine is a bit like buying a motor vehicle – with the more you spend, the more likely you are of getting a better quality machine. The other comparison I can make to automobiles is that coffee machines enjoy being used and like cars they don't like sitting around idle. This is one main consideration I would examine before I purchase a coffee machine and grinder. How much use am I going to get out of this new toy?

Another consideration we discovered doing this year's book is that people are wanting simpler, cleaner methods of espresso coffee. Most people, once they're addicted to a good brew, want a great coffee with out much fuss. Manual coffee machines take some dedication to operate and they are messy. So if you're a clean freak, go for an Automatic or a pod system. You will still get a reasonable coffee, but if you're after perfection go for a good manual group handle machine and a grinder.

Many of the cheaper model espresso makers on the market will only do one function at a time, ether coffee extraction or steaming milk. This is because cheaper machines have a single boiler or a thermo block. There are some manufactures bringing out duel thermo block machines that will do both functions together. This will speed up the coffee making process.

The last choice I would be making on a purchase of an espresso machine is whether you like coffee enough to jump straight into a Rolls and skip all the learning equipment along the way. Good quality coffee machines do hold their value and can become quite collectable, look on it as becoming an asset.

Cat 1

The novice - Low budget, may be a student, likes the difference in taste of espresso over other methods of coffee making.

Recommendation: we would suggest to purchase a small group handle machine with a good tamp and a small dose grinder. Total spend between \$300 - \$400

Cat 2

The dinner party cook – Mid range budget, likes to visit different cafes, has experienced world travel, likes to cook and entertain friends.

Recommendation: I believe this level of coffee lover needs a machine that has some power as to keep up with the coffee demand of the dinner party. We recommend an espresso machine with a boiler and a commercial style group handle. A demand dose grinder with a group handle filling option would suit this system. Total spend \$ 600 - \$800

Cat 3

The corporate – Good wage, busy lifestyle, enjoys dining out regularly, dislikes time wasting and cherishes time off.

Recommendation: This person needs a fully automatic machine, a plug and play option with in-built grinder and milk frother. A pod machine would also suit this person for the clean and convenient nature of pods not creating grinds all over the white marble bench.

Cat 4

The Coffee Geek – All they talk about is coffee at work, they surf the coffee forums, they have coffee sacks hanging in their sheds and they drink machiatios and piccolo lattes when they visit privileged cafes.

Recommendation: a heat exchange/boiler machine with gauges, commercial group handles, robust with lots of polished metal. Non-pressurized filter baskets, a full Barista kit of a metal tamp, thermometer, shot glass. We would recommend a small conical dose grinder for this system.
Total spend \$1500 - \$3000