

ONLINE COURSE

BARISTA FOUNDATION

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LESSON 1: WHAT IS COFFEE?

Understanding its Journey from Plant to Cup

What is Coffee?

That fruit is known as a coffee cherry, and it grows on a shrub that thrives in tropical regions, usually between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. Inside the coffee cherry, you'll usually find two seeds, though in rare cases you'll get a peaberry, a single rounded seed instead of two.

LET'S BREAK DOWN THE STRUCTURE OF A COFFEE CHERRY:

1. Skin (or peel):

This is the thin, colourful outer layer. When ripe, it's typically red, yellow, or even orange depending on the varietal.

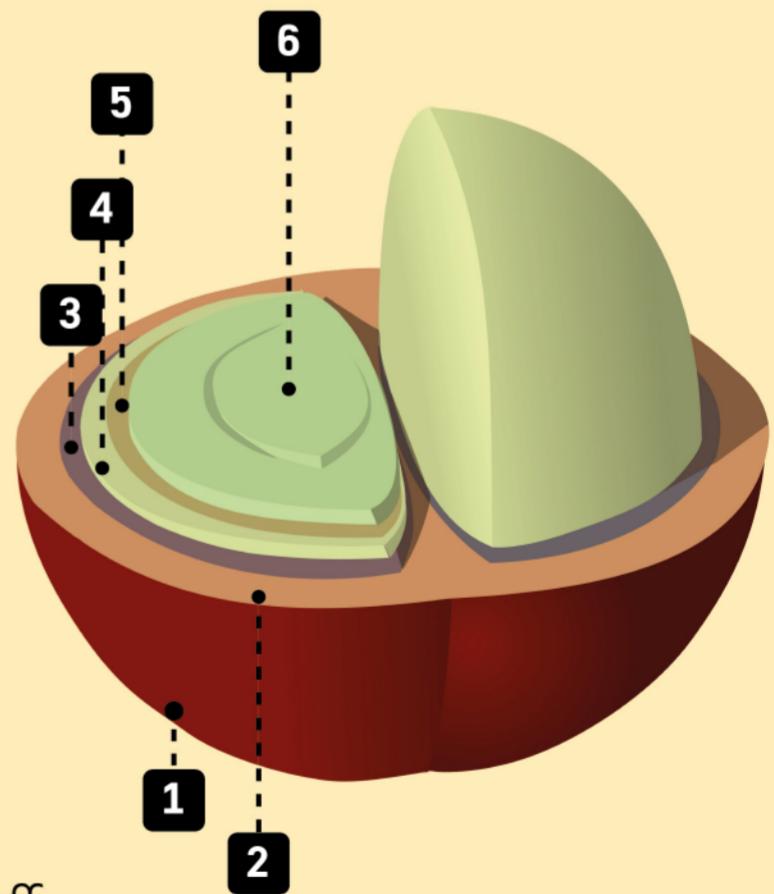
2. Pulp: The fruity flesh beneath the skin. It's sugary and juicy.

3. Mucilage: A sticky, honey-like layer under the pulp that's rich in sugars and amino acids. This layer contributes significantly to the flavour development during fermentation.

4. Parchment: A thin, papery shell that encases the bean. You'll still find this layer in parchment-dried or wet-hulled coffees.

5. Silver skin: A delicate membrane that clings tightly to the bean. During roasting, most of it is shed as chaff.

6. Bean (or seed): The green seed inside. This is the part that gets dried, roasted, ground, and brewed into the drink we know and love.



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LESSON 1:

The genus *Coffea* is most commonly reported to include around 124 species, though some sources, including more inclusive or recent ones, puts the count between 129 and 139. Now let's look at the three main species of coffee cultivated commercially.

ARABICA (COFFEA ARABICA)

- Grown at higher altitudes, usually 1,000 metres and above.
- Delivers complex, sweet, floral, and acidic flavour profiles.
- More susceptible to pests and disease.
- Lower in caffeine (about 1–1.5%).
- Makes up about 60–70% of global production.

ROBUSTA (COFFEA CANEPHORA)

- Grown at lower altitudes and is more tolerant to heat and pests.
- Tends to be more bitter, earthy, and has a heavier body.
- Higher caffeine content (around 2–3%).
- Commonly used in instant coffee and espresso blends for added crema.

There's also Liberica, which is less commercially common, but highly distinctive. Often described as smoky, woody or fruity like jackfruit and grown in select regions like the Philippines, Malaysia and parts of Indonesia. Liberica is larger in cherry, bean and its tree compared to the other two.



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HOMEWORK

1. Get two different types of coffee (beans or ground). One marked “100% Arabica” and one with Robusta or a blend if possible.
2. Brew both using the same method: French Press, Drip, Moka Pot, whichever brewing device you own.
3. Taste them side by side and answer:
 - Which is more acidic or fruity?
 - Which is more bitter or earthy?
 - Which one do you enjoy more, and why?

**Write down your thoughts — use your own words.
It's about building your sensory vocabulary.**



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