

ONLINE COURSE

BARISTA FOUNDATION

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LESSON 2: COFFEE PROCESSING AND FLAVOUR PROFILES

When we say “processing,” we’re referring to what happens after the coffee cherries are picked, and before the green beans are roasted. It’s how the outer layers of the cherry are removed, how long the beans are fermented, how they’re dried – and all of that affects flavour in the cup.

THERE ARE THREE MAIN METHODS USED TO PROCESS COFFEE:

WASHED (WET) PROCESS

In the washed method, the skin and pulp are removed from the coffee cherry using a depulper and a fermentation stage. The mucilage is broken down, usually with water and natural microbes, then the beans are washed clean and dried.

FLAVOUR PROFILE:

- Clean
- Bright acidity
- More focus on the origin’s characteristics (soil, altitude, variety)



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NATURAL (DRY) PROCESS

Here, the whole coffee cherry is dried in the sun before anything is removed. As it dries, the sugars from the fruit layers seep into the seed, intensifying sweetness and body. After drying, the outer layers are mechanically removed.

FLAVOUR PROFILE:

- Fruity
- Heavy-bodied
- Sometimes winery or fermented



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HONEY (SEMI-WASHED) PROCESS

This method removes the skin, but keeps all or some of the mucilage on the bean during drying. The name “honey” doesn't come from flavour, but from the sticky feel of the mucilage.

There are different types of honey, although there will be some variations in what these terms mean from farm to farm:

WHITE & YELLOW HONEY

White honey tends to be mechanically washed, while Yellow honey is semi-washed and more mucilage is left around the bean.

GOLD, RED & BLACK HONEY

Gold honey will be dried when the sun's out with little humidity, while Red honey is processed under more shade to slow down its drying time, increasing the amount of humidity. Black honey takes a longer time, dried under even more shade.



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HOMework

1. Try to find two coffees processed differently – ideally one washed and one natural (you can get honey as well if you want to).
2. Brew them using the same method.
3. Compare their flavour, aroma, and texture.

If you can't find two different coffees, no worries – look at the label on your coffee bag or visit the roaster's website. Read about the process and take notes on the flavour descriptors.

Write your impressions:

- Is one brighter or more acidic?
- Is one heavier or sweeter?
- What's your personal preference?



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