

ONLINE COURSE

BARISTA INTERMEDIATE

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LESSON 5: MILK TEXTURING AND LATTE ART

HOW MILK PROCESSING AFFECTS STEAMING

Milk is not just milk. Different processing methods can change its texture, sweetness, and steaming behaviour. At an advanced level, knowing this helps you adjust your technique.

- **Fractional freezing (freeze distillation):** Concentrates milk by freezing and removing part of the water content. This produces a creamier texture and sweeter flavour. The increased protein and fat concentration can create more stable microfoam.
- **Evaporation:** Reduces water content through gentle heating, resulting in a denser, slightly caramelised flavour. Can create thicker foam, but be mindful of overheating during steaming.
- **Blending:** Mixing milk from different sources (or combining dairy and plant-based milks) to achieve specific flavour or texture characteristics. You may need to adjust stretching time depending on the blend's protein content.

Higher protein content generally gives you more foam, while higher fat content gives you a silkier texture.



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LESSON 5:

ADVANCED MICROFOAM TECHNIQUE

- **Stretching:** Incorporate air gently in the first 3–5 seconds, listening for a soft, consistent “kissing” sound. Avoid sudden bursts of air that create big bubbles.
- **Spinning/rolling:** Position the steam wand tip slightly off-centre and deeper in the milk to create a whirlpool. This integrates foam and milk for a smooth, glossy texture. With dairy milk, you can do this up until the temperature reaches about 32°C.
- **Temperature control:** Aim for 55–65°C. Stop steaming as soon as the jug becomes too hot to hold comfortably for more than 2–3 seconds.



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LESSON 5:

POURING BASICS FOR LATTE ART

Latte art is not just decoration, it is proof of well-textured milk and proper pouring technique.

- **Start high:** Begin pouring from 5–10cm above the cup to sink the milk beneath the crema.
- **Lower the jug:** Once the cup is about half full, bring the jug close to the surface to let the foam rise.
- **Control the flow:** A slow, steady pour creates clean shapes; a rushed pour blurs the pattern.

THE HEART PATTERN

- Start with a high, steady pour in the centre.
- Lower the jug as you pour, allowing the foam to form a white circle.
- Lift slightly and draw a line through the circle to form a heart.



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LESSON 5:

THE TULIP PATTERN

- o Begin with a small pour for the base, then stop.
- o Pour another layer on top, slightly overlapping.
- o Continue layering until you reach the desired number of “leaves”, then draw through to finish.



THE ROSETTA PATTERN

The rosetta is one of the most recognised latte art designs, and it builds directly on the skills used in the heart and tulip.

- o Begin with a high pour in the centre, then lower the jug to the surface once the cup is half full.
- o Move the jug gently side to side in a smooth wave motion while slowly moving backwards. This creates the “leaf” effect.
- o Finish by lifting the jug slightly and drawing a thin line through the centre of the pattern to define the stem.



Key tips: keep the pour steady, the side-to-side motion even and the flow consistent. Any irregularities will distort the “leaves”.



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LESSON 5:

STEAMING DIFFERENT MILK ALTERNATIVES

Not all customers drink dairy milk, and as a barista you'll need to adapt. Plant-based milks behave differently due to varying fat and protein structures.

- **Soy milk:** Froths well but can curdle if overheated or mixed with very acidic espresso. Keep steaming to the lower end of the temperature range (50–55°C).
- **Oat milk:** Popular for its creamy texture. Produces silky microfoam, but can become thin if overstretched. Works well for latte art.
- **Almond milk:** Lower protein makes it harder to achieve stable foam. Gentle stretching and lower temperatures help, though patterns may not hold as cleanly.
- **Coconut milk:** Can split under high heat; often produces heavier, less stable foam. Best for flavour, but not ideal for complex latte art.
- **Blends (e.g. oat-soy, almond-oat):** Designed for barista use. Usually gives more reliable microfoam and holds shapes better.

General rule: **less protein = less foam stability, more fat = creamier texture.** Adjust stretching and pouring accordingly.

COMMON LATTE ART MISTAKES

- **Foam too thick:** Caused by over-stretching the milk. Thick foam doesn't integrate with crema.
- **Pour too fast:** Shapes lose definition.
- **Cup too full before patterning:** Leaves no space for the design to form.



HOMEWORK

HEART, TULIP, AND ROSETTA PRACTICE

1. Steam milk with the goal of creating glossy microfoam.
2. Practise pouring a heart until you can produce a clean, symmetrical shape three times in a row
3. Move on to the tulip, focusing on clean layering and definition.
4. Finally, practise the rosetta. Start with short pours to master the leaf movement before attempting full-cup designs.
5. Try steaming and pouring with one plant-based alternative (such as oat milk) to understand how it differs from dairy milk.

