

## COFFEE FACTS AND FABLES

There is a wealth of opinions about coffee, from old wives' tales to articles on websites such as CoffeeGeek.com. This issue will focus on the top 10 coffee myths to see how much fact can be found amidst the fable.

### Myth # 1

**You should store your coffee in the fridge or freezer.**

Coffee should **not** be stored in the refrigerator or the freezer. Coffee can absorb food odors—what a waste it would be to store fine coffee next to fish or strong-smelling cheese!



#### Fact:

Coffee should be stored in an airtight container away from direct sunlight, heat, and moisture.



### Myth # 2

**You can judge a coffee's freshness by its appearance.**

Oily, glossy coffee is sometimes said to be fresher than non-oily coffee. In truth, the appearance of a coffee depends on so many factors, including roast level, bean oil content, storage conditions, etc., that sight is no guide. Only taste and smell give a reliable result.

### Myth # 3

**Terms like "Espresso Roast" actually define roast levels.**

In reality, coffee labeled Espresso Roast, —or French or Italian Roast—can have many roast levels. One common "industry standard" definition of roast level is the Agtron system, which relies on the comparison of roasted coffee to standardised color plates. Agtron readings range from #95 (lightest roast) through #10 (darkest common roast).

ROAST	AGTRON
Light	> 70
Medium-Light	61 – 69
Medium	50 – 60
Medium-Dark	45 – 49
Dark	35 – 44
Very Dark	25 – 34
Extreme-Dark	< 25

*Detail of an Agtron chart*

### Myth # 4

**There is a single grind level which suits most brewing methods.**

Optimum grind level is usually determined by the amount of time the coffee spends in contact with water at the correct temperature: the finer the grind, the less contact time.

#### Fact:

Different brewing methods require different grinds.



### Did you know...

- The word "barista" means "bartender" in Italian, but in the U.S. it refers to those who prepare and serve espresso-based drinks.
- The United States now has some of the top-rated baristas in the world—American Heather Perry was the runner-up in the 2007 World Barista Championship.



## MEDICAL MYTHS ABOUT COFFEE

### Myth # 5

#### Coffee may be bad for health. \*

The health effects of coffee have been much debated over the past twenty years. While excessive intake of any stimulant can be dangerous, the latest research has not only confirmed that moderate coffee-drinking doesn't cause harm, but has also uncovered possible benefits. Harvard research studies show that the risk for type 2 diabetes is lower among those who drink coffee regularly than among those who don't. Tomas DePaulis, PhD, research scientist at Vanderbilt University's Institute for Coffee Studies (which conducts its own medical research and tracks coffee studies from around the world) has suggested that coffee may reduce the risk of developing gallstones, colon cancer, and Parkinson's disease; improve cognitive function; and lower the risk of liver damage in people at high risk for liver disease.

### Myth # 6

#### Coffee cures a hangover. \*

Caffeine will wake up a person who is sleepy from too much alcohol, but it has no effect on sobriety. In fact, coffee can actually make a hangover worse by dehydrating the body.

### Myth # 7

#### Coffee cures a headache. \*

Caffeine is used in various painkillers, since it appears to increase the power of aspirin by as much as 40 percent. However, caffeine gradually loses its effectiveness—and its dehydrating effect may actually cause headaches.

\* adapted from material found at [bellaonline.com](http://bellaonline.com) and [webmd.com](http://webmd.com)

### Myth # 8

#### Lattes have more milk and less coffee than cappuccinos.

Lattes and capuccinos have the same amount of espresso. Lattes have slightly less froth than cappuccinos, so they do have more milk.

### Myth # 9

#### The best coffees in the world come from Italy.

Actually, no coffee is grown in Italy at all. Italy's coffee fame rests on its coffee companies' abilities as roasters and blenders for espresso.

### Myth # 10

#### Energy drinks have more caffeine than coffee.

False. Caffeine content varies from drink to drink. For example, an 8-ounce can of Red Bull, known as an ultimate "energy drink," has only 80 milligrams of caffeine—less than the 100 milligrams in the average 8-ounce cup of coffee. For accurate information on caffeine content, you'll need to check labels on a case-by-case basis.

How much caffeine is in your favorite beverage?		
Coffee (average)	8-ounce cup	100 milligrams
Black tea	8-ounce cup	40 milligrams
Green tea	8-ounce cup	20 milligrams
Red Bull	8-ounce can	80 milligrams

—according to Nutritionist Joy Bauer

## NEXT MONTH'S TOPIC: Doing Justice to Good Coffee

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