

A Coffee Lover's BUYING GUIDE



The time of year has come when shiny objects are on display and at deep discounts. However, once you've decided you would like to purchase one of these beauties, where do you start? According to our customer service team, this is a common dilemma, as the most frequently asked question they get is "what is the best machine?" or "what do you recommend?" While we love to share our thoughts on our favorite machines, what is most important to think about is what will work best for you. To help you out, we have created a list of questions you should be thinking about when you start shopping.



What do You Want to Get Out Your Machine?

I WANT THE MACHINE TO DO THE WORK FOR ME.

A superautomatic espresso machine is the best choice for you. These workhorses make life easier by grinding, tamping and brewing your espresso shots for you. Some machines are even able to froth your milk automatically (others use a standard steam wand) or have one-touch drink functionality so you can make your entire drink with just the touch of a button. This will allow you to create consistent coffee and espresso drinks like lattes and cappuccinos. The beauty of these machines is that they allow you to save on time, space and even clean up!

I WANT A MACHINE THAT WILL GIVE ME MORE CONTROL OVER THE END RESULT.

Semi-automatic espresso machines allow you to be your own barista and adjust the grind, dosage and extraction time of the shot to your liking. The steam wand on these machines also allows you to steam, froth or heat your milk to your desired temperature. This machine is ideal for do-it-yourselfers who have the time and additional equipment necessary to play with the machine and create the perfect drink.

What is Your Price Point?

This part of the decision making process comes down to cold, hard cash. You need to determine just how much you are willing to spend on an espresso machine. Keep in mind that, depending on what route you go (and how much of a java aficionado you are), you may also end up buying additional accessories as well as coffee, creamer, syrups and the like. Based on what your price point is, there are two paths you can take.

Semi-Automatic Espresso Machine

HIGH PRICE POINT

If you want to purchase a higher end semi-automatic machine, make sure you want (and have the space for) a separate grinder. Since you will be dialing in your own shots, having a separate grinder will be an important part of your setup.

LOW PRICE POINT

If you want to purchase a less expensive semi-automatic machine, you can save money by holding off on buying a grinder (you can always upgrade your setup at a later date). The way to do this is by using pre-ground coffee and a pressurized portafilter. So, if this is what you would like to do, make sure you are okay with this approach.

Superautomatic Espresso Machine

HIGH PRICE POINT

Many higher end superautomatic machines have one-touch drink functionality that allows you to make your favorite drink with the touch of a button (some machines will even allow you to save personalized drink settings, so you can have your coffee just the way you like it).

With no need to mess with the right grind, tamp and timing of your shot, or to steam and froth your milk, this machine is a dream for busy people.

LOW PRICE POINT

If you are in the market for an inexpensive superautomatic, you will save money by purchasing a machine that has a steam wand instead of automatic milk frothing.

With these machines, you will be spared from having to calibrate your shot, but will have to manually steam and froth your milk. However, this provides you with the opportunity to heat your milk to the temperature of your liking and get just the right amount of frothiness.

You've decided on whether you want a semi-auto or superauto, and how much you want to spend on the machine, but have you really thought about how it will impact your lifestyle on a day-to-day basis? Before you pull the trigger, there are a few final questions you should consider.

What Type of Space do You Have?

I HAVE A BIG KITCHEN WITH LOTS OF COUNTER SPACE

The sky's the limit with a huge kitchen that has lots of room. If you are planning on purchasing a semi-automatic machine, you'll have plenty of space for a separate grinder.

If you are interested in a superautomatic machine, you'll have room to spare as most superautomatics are pretty compact (since everything is built into the machine).

I HAVE A SMALL KITCHEN WITH LIMITED COUNTER SPACE

If you are thinking about getting a semi-automatic machine but your kitchen is on the smaller side, make sure you'll have enough space to squeeze in a separate grinder without cramping your style.

If a separate grinder just won't fit, you may want to consider getting one of the few semi-automatic espresso machines with a built in grinder, like the [Breville Barista Express](#). Other alternatives include using pre-ground coffee and a pressurized portafilter or going with a superautomatic machine.

Are You Okay with Waiting for Your Machine to Heat Up in the Morning?

YES, I LIKE TO EASE INTO MY DAY.

Semi-autos take about 10-15 minutes to warm up once they are turned on, so these machines are best for people who aren't in a rush.

However, if you have a busy schedule and are set on a semi-auto, there is one machine that might fit with your lifestyle. The [Breville Dual Boiler](#) has an auto start (this happens to be the only semi-automatic that has this feature) that allows you to preheat the machine at a set time.

NO, I NEED TO BE OUT THE DOOR.

Superautos have very minimal heat up time, so if you are the type of person who needs hot espresso as soon as they wake up (and on the way to work), this is the machine for you.

Finally, if you have a love for oily beans or dark roasts like Starbucks', you should not buy a superauto espresso machine. The oil the beans produce can cause the grinder and brew unit to clog, often doing a number on the machine as these parts can be difficult (or impossible, depending on the machine) to clean and repair.

Now that you've determined whether you would like to purchase a semi-automatic or a superautomatic espresso machine, here is some of our favorite gear we hope to find under our tree this year. Those with friends and family members who aren't fans of espresso shouldn't fret; there are options for coffee and tea drinkers too!

Superautomatic Espresso Machines



[DeLonghi Magnifica ESAM3300](#)

This small, and inexpensive superautomatic espresso machine certainly allows you to get the most bang for your buck. With front-end access to all the controls, water tank, dreg box (this is the only superautomatic that doesn't require you to move it to access all these features) and a built in burr grinder, the ESAM3300 is great for people with limited counter space. The machine also has a bypass doser so you can brew ground decaf without removing the espresso beans in the machine's grinder. The ESAM3300 is one of the most reliable espresso machines, as customers report low instances of problems and breakdowns.



[Saeco Expresia Evo](#)

The Expresia Evo is a great option for those who want their espresso machine to do the work for them. With a removable milk carafe, the Evo can truly make your lattes and cappuccinos at the touch of a button. However, if you don't want to be entirely hands off, the Expresia Evo is also equipped with an alternate steam and hot water wand, which are not found on many one touch machines.

Not only will this machine make your drink for you, but it will also help with the clean up. In addition to automatic rinsing when the machine turns on and off, the Evo has an automatic cleaning and descaling cycle.



[Krups Barista One-Touch
Cappuccino Full Auto EA9000](#)

Nearly completely automatic, this machine does just about everything for you. However, the best part about this machine is that it can steam and froth your milk right in your cup. Say goodbye to messy milk containers and hose hook-ups! How is this possible? Depending on what drink you choose, the Barista One-Touch's automatic frothing spout will come out of the machine to take care of your milk, and then retreat back into the machine for an automatic rinse after each use (making clean up a breeze as well).

The Barista One-Touch is incredibly easy to use, with illustrated instructions on its digital screen. The EA9000 also allows each user to create a profile containing up to eight saved customized drinks – way more than most machines.



[DeLonghi Primadonna S
De Luxe ECAM26455M
Espresso Machine](#)

If you like having a lot of options when it comes to your espresso, the DeLonghi Primadonna is the machine for you! You can choose from three frothing options when using the instant frothing device on the machine or you can use the Primadonna's steam wand and hot water spout to manually steam your milk.

The machine also allows you to choose from 5 different coffee strengths, 13 different grind settings, as well as adjust things like the machine's auto on/off settings, the length of the shot and temperature of the coffee.

Semi-Automatic Espresso Machines



[Saeco Via Venezia](#)

This compact machine is perfect for people with smaller kitchens. Plus, with its pressurized portafilter, the Via Venezia is one of the easiest espresso machines to use since you don't have to tamp your shot.



[Rancilio Silvia Espresso Machine Version 3](#)

If you are looking for a mid-priced machine that performs at a high-end level, the Silvia is the best option. Well-designed, reliable and easy to care for, the Silvia produces perfect shots. However, to produce those ideal shots, you will need to get your grinds dialed-in, so it's important that you have or invest in a good grinder.



[Rocket Espresso Cellini
Premium Plus - V2](#)

This handcrafted espresso machine is not only easy on the eyes, but also easy to use. The Rocket Cellini Premium Plus makes ideal shots, and fast, which is great for making several drinks at once. The steam wand and water dispenser are also insulated, so you also won't have to worry about burning yourself on them.

Coffee Makers



[Technivorm Moccamaster
Coffee Brewer KBG741](#)

The Technivorm Moccamaster is the cream of the crop when it comes to drip coffee makers, and it really shines in this red metallic color (it does come in other colors if red is not your thing). One of the few coffee makers certificated by the Specialty Coffee Association of America for brewing at the optimal temperature, the Technivorm will create the perfect cup every time.



If you are looking for an easy and low-tech way to make coffee, the SoftBrew is your solution. Place your preferred amount of ground coffee in the filter inside, add boiling hot water, brew for four to eight minutes and your coffee is ready!

Plus the clean, modern design of this coffee maker makes it pretty enough to leave out on your counter.

[Sowden SoftBrew Coffee
Maker with Scoop](#)

Loose Leaf Tea Drinkers



Tea drinkers will love this clear glass teapot that shows off the colorful liquor produced by their favorite loose leaf tea. The fine mesh filter of the stainless steel tea infuser also prevents any stray leaves from sneaking into your brew.

[Adagio Glass Teapot
and Infuser](#)

Alternative to Coffee & Tea



[Bodum Hot Chocolate
Maker and Frother](#)

This stylish hot chocolate maker is perfect for those cold, windy nights when you want to curl up by the fireplace with a cup of steaming hot cocoa. What's even better is that this hot chocolate maker is easy to use. Just pour in your cocoa mix or syrup, add milk and pump the spiral rod up and down - you are good to go!

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