

Instructions
for the

Alexia

By



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Introduction

First of all, thank you for your business!

You are going to love your Alexia – it combines beauty, value, and great brewing for making the best espresso, cappuccino, and lattes you've ever tasted! These instructions include hints that will help you get started quickly.

Caution: The Alexia does not have an automatic fill feature, therefore it is important that you follow these set up instructions to fill your boiler before using or you will risk damage to the machine thereby voiding the warranty.

First-time Setup

- 1 Remove water reservoir and rinse with clean water.
- 2 Before filling reservoir with tap water, test water for hardness with test strips provided. Fill a glass with cold tap water, dip tip of test strip into water for one second, pull strip out of water and hold horizontally for 15 seconds, after fifteen seconds compare the color to the chart on the side of the package to determine how many grains of hardness is in your tap water. Acceptable hardness is 3 grains or less.

Note: Should your hardness level exceed 3 grains, contact us to discuss your options in dealing with this problem.
- 3 Fill reservoir with water being careful not to overfill. Return reservoir to the machine and insert silicone hoses back into the reservoir.
- 4 Plug machine in, place a pitcher under the steam wand and open the steam valve, flip both the power switch and the pump switch on. Note: The power switch is the one farthest to the left and the pump switch is the one in the center.
- 5 The pump should now be running and pulling water from the reservoir and filling the boiler. When water starts to come out of the steam wand flip the pump switch off and close the steam valve. Note: Pump switch is the one in the center. Your boiler is now full.
- 6 Your machine should now be heating up. Be sure one of your portafilters is in the group while the machine is heating up, which ever one you want to brew coffee with first. It will take approximately 10 minutes for the boiler to reach temperature when the center heating light goes out.

Note: #1 It is important to understand that just because your machine is up to temperature it is **not** necessarily ready to make great espresso. To make great espresso with thick rich crema

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everything must be hot, the group, the portafilter, and the cup you are brewing into. This can take as long as 30 minutes for optimal brewing temperature.

7 **You are now ready to brew your first shot of espresso coffee.**

Tips For Making Great Espresso

Golden rules according to Dr. Illy

Each 30ml espresso requires seven grams of finely ground coffee, tightly compacted (approximately 30 pounds of pressure) and should take between 18 and 23 seconds to extract.

Great espresso made easy according to Chris

Let me begin by explaining the three main variables of preparing great espresso.

1. Quantity of ground coffee,
2. Tamp firmness, and
3. The grind.

Quantity of ground coffee. Inside your portafilter insert basket, there is a ridge about 1/4" down from the top. That is where the retainer clip that holds the insert basket in place is located. This ridge is not meant to be a tamp line; however, it serves very nicely as a reference for beginners. Loosely fill the basket to the top or slightly mounding over the top. You will then compress (tamp) the grounds to approximately the height of the ridge. Your first compression of the ground coffee should be very gentle, just enough to slightly compact the coffee. Then gently tap the side of the portafilter to knock grounds that are up on the inside wall of your insert basket loose. Now you make your 30 pound tamp. Next with less than 5 pounds of pressure, twist the tamper 360 degrees to polish the surface of the ground coffee. If you have done it right the tamper should sit inside the basket and be level, not higher on one side than the other. You are trying to prepare the ground coffee to be hit with 125 PSI of water pressure. At 125 PSI the water will take the path of least resistance. Your objective is to be sure there is NO PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE. If not done properly, you get channeling and squinters. Our FAQ section is a wealth of information with links to some of the best articles I have ever read or seen and they also have pictures to guide your lesson.

Tamp firmness. The only thing you need to remember about tamping is consistency. Don't press with five pounds of pressure in the morning and fifty pounds of pressure when you come home from a tough day at work. If I apply twenty pounds of tamp pressure and you apply thirty pounds, my grind will be slightly finer than yours will be, but we can both achieve the same result – great espresso.

The grind. Before discussing the grind, allow me to share a tip to make this even easier. Take your double filter basket out of your double-spouted portafilter and put it into the single-spouted

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portafilter. Why did I have you do this? Simple – it is always easier to make double shots than single shots. This is because doubles are more forgiving if you have slight variations in the two previous variables: quantity of ground coffee and tamp firmness.

Adjust your grind so that when you activate the pump, the flow of coffee coming out of the portafilter spout looks like the tapered tail of a mouse and has approximately the thickness of ballpoint pen filler.

Now, last but not least, when is it done? The coffee tells you when it is finished; simply observe the color of the crema. When the crema changes from a reddish brown color to a lighter blond color, it is done; stop brewing by pressing the lever all the way down. If you run the pump after the color has begun to change to light blond, you will only dilute the coffee and extract undesirable bitters.

If you really want to know what is happening, purchase a bottomless portafilter. You will get instant feed back. There is also a link to an article in our FAQ section on how to use the bottomless portafilter.

You have to admit that is a lot easier than using shot glasses and timers!

Tip: Get into the habit of disposing of the spent grounds immediately after brewing espresso. After disposing of the grounds, return the portafilter to the group and lift the lever up for three to five seconds to rinse away excess oils and loose grounds. By regularly following this procedure, you will greatly reduce the tar-like buildup on the dispersion screen that occurs if you allow coffee oils to dry and bake on the hot group.

How to Froth Milk for Cappuccinos and Lattes

To steam milk with your Alexia follow these procedures. First flip the steam switch on, the switch farthest to the right, the temperature in your boiler will now rise as well as the pressure. After approximately two minutes you are ready to bleed off the excess water in the boiler as follows. Place a pitcher under the steam wand and open the steam valve, water will come out. It may be necessary to repeat this process a couple of times until you get all the excess water out. Once you have bled off all the excess water your pressure will rise and the center red light will go out and you are now ready to steam milk.

First, let's talk about some of the first things you need to learn in order to become 'barista-like' in your techniques.

Milk – whole milk works best to steam, both in technique and in flavor! Lower fat milks contain mostly water which will not foam well and will be almost tasteless when steamed. After all your hard work you will be left with a less than desirable tasting beverage.

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Milk – your whole milk needs to be as cold as possible to ensure the creamiest, sweetest, and best tasting micro-foam. Once the milk has reached a temperature between 150-160 degrees, you must stop the process. The longer amount of time you have with the cold milk gives you that extra time to continue making the milk creamy and sweet tasting. Milk heated above 160 degrees will be burnt and taste terrible.

Frothing Pitcher – keeping your stainless steel pitcher in the freezer is another tip which helps keep the milk its' coldest. The size of your pitcher is relative to the size and number of drinks you will be preparing at the time. Of course our recommendation on pitcher choices would be our own **“Pro Barista Steaming Pitcher”** which has become the pitcher of choice of the renowned baristas* who helped train Chris' Coffee Service in this frothing technique. These baristas felt the Pro Barista Steaming Pitcher promoted a user friendly rolling of the milk which made it simple to create thick micro-foam for pouring Latte Art.

Amount of Milk – Too little milk in your frothing pitcher will cause splashing when you turn on the steam arm; too much milk will cause overflow and make a huge mess. The pitcher must be filled between 1/3 and 1/2 full to have the maximum capacity for properly steaming milk. If your pitcher has a spout, fill it to half an inch below where the spout starts.

Stretching the milk – refers to the initial heating of the milk and the forceful introduction of air into the milk (using the steam wand pressure) – **stretching** the consistency of the milk. Stretching continues until the milk reaches an approximate temperature of 100 degrees (body temperature).

Texturizing the milk – refers to the next phase of frothing whereby the steam wand is submerged in the milk and the pressure continues to roll the milk. The process breaks down the large air bubbles into tiny air bubbles which then creates the smooth and creamy **texture** that is most desirable.

Technique

As you face your espresso machine, point the steam arm over your drip tray and open up the steam valve in order to purge out any unwanted water that may have collected inside the wand due to condensation – you do not want that added to your delicious beverage!

Next, position the steam arm so it is facing directly toward you and slightly angle it 45 degrees from the base.

Holding your half-filled steam pitcher with the handle facing you, submerge the tip of the steam wand approximately an inch below the surface of the cold milk. Your pitcher bottom should be parallel with the countertop. The steam arm should gently rest in the spout of the steam pitcher. Now slightly tilt the pitcher left, keeping the arm away from the side of the pitcher. Open the steam valve completely and position the pitcher so the tip is just below the surface of the milk. This action creates the **‘stretching’** of the milk – in other words, adding air to the milk. When done properly, the sound you hear at this point resembles ‘sucking’. You continue this until the milk reaches an approximate temperature of 100 degrees.

After your milk has reached this ‘body temperature’, submerge the tip of the steam arm approximately one inch below the surface of the milk. This process continues to roll the milk over itself again and

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again – breaking the large air bubbles into tiny air bubbles – resulting in a new, creamy and sweeter, **texture** of the milk. When your milk has reached approximately 155 degrees – turn the steam valve off.

Helpful Tips and Information

- When turning the steam valve off, always keep the tip under the surface of the milk for approximately 3 seconds. If you pull it out too soon, you will destroy the nice velvety micro-foam.
- While texturizing the milk, if you lower the tip too far into the milk you create turbulence rather than rolling. Turbulence will not make micro-foam.
- If there are a few bubbles in the milk after you have finished, wait 5-10 seconds to allow all the remaining bubbles to surface, then simply tap the edge of the pitcher on the counter and swirl the milk slightly and they will disappear. This is often a good time to purge your steam arm and wipe it down.
- Be sure to keep your steamed milk moving/swirling until you are ready to pour since milk has a natural tendency to separate.

Important: When you are done steaming milk it is important to refill the boiler as follows. Turn off the steam switch, flip the pump switch up, (the one in the center) and open the steam valve, when water comes out of the steam valve your boiler is now refilled. Close the steam valve and turn the pump switch off.

Failure to refill the boiler or leaving the machine in steam mode may expose the heating element and cause damage to the heater or other components that is considered neglect and is not covered under warranty.

Maintenance

- 9 **Backflushing** is a vital maintenance procedure you must follow to help keep your machine running flawlessly for years to come. There are two types of back flushing, one with plain water, and one with espresso machine cleaner.
- Plain water back flushing should be done at least once a week, however if you are so inclined feel free to back flush with plain water as often as you like, you won't harm a thing.
- To perform a plain water back flush take your blank portafilter insert, the round stainless steel disk with no holes in it, turn it upside down and use it to pry out the insert basket out of one of your portafilters, it doesn't matter which portafilter you use. Next place the blank insert into the portafilter and slap it hard with the palm of your hand to secure it in place. Now place the portafilter into the group and snug it up firmly. Next raise the brew lever all the way up for 15 seconds then lower it all the way down, water will discharge out of the bottom of the group into the drip tray with force, this is normal. Repeat 3 to 5 times.
- To perform back flushing with espresso machine cleaner you follow the same procedures as above with a few minor differences. The first difference is back flushing with espresso machine cleaner only needs to be done approximately once a month. I don't recommend back flushing

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with cleaner more often than once every 3 weeks at most. Next difference, place 1/3 of a teaspoon full of espresso machine cleaner into the blank portafilter insert before inserting it into the group. Now follow the same procedure as above or until all the cleaner is dissolved. Remove the portafilter from the group and rinse thoroughly, take a damp cloth and wipe the underside of the group. After you have finished this procedure I recommend you pull a shot of espresso and dispose of it to cure the group, you're now finished and ready to go for another month.

Note: I only recommend using either Puro Café or Urnex Cafiza Espresso Machine Cleaner, they are specially formulated for this purpose. The use of none recommended cleaners can affect the performance of your machine and may even damage it.

Contact Us

Enjoy your espresso machine and remember should you have any questions, either visit our FAQ section at the bottom of our web site or contact us by phone at 800-724-3459 or by email at chris@chriscoffee.com. Also check out the website home-barista.com for tips and techniques on making great espresso.

Important: Save the shipping carton and all the packing material your machine came with. This is very important in case you need to send your machine back to us for any reason. If you do need to send it back for any reason, you must first call our service department and obtain a return authorization number prior to shipping. Be sure you insure your machine and pack it securely. We can't be responsible for any damage that might occur while in transit to us. It will be your responsibility to file a claim with the shipper. We will of coarse be happy to assist you on this end in any way we can.

Thank you for you business,

Chris