

Do Italians take their Espresso Serious?



Espresso is perhaps one of Italy's greatest gifts to mankind (next to Gelato, opera and art of course!). So why is there a concern about the "true identity of Italian coffee" amongst experts in Italy? Mostly in part due to the "chain" cafes in Europe passing off shoddy versions of espresso and cappuccino. Italy's parliamentary agriculture commissioner says that many cafes in Europe do not have the faintest idea how to make a good cup!

So, to ensure the identity and authenticity of the Italian espresso stays true, the commissioner has established criteria that would award Continental cafes a "certificate of authenticity" for their espresso and cappuccino.

Here are some of what the commission is looking for in order to receive this award.

- The color of the espresso should be of a "hazelnut hue" with ornate flourishes of red and a smokiness that creates a uniform "tiger-stripe" pattern
- The espresso must be "aristocratic, elegant, noble, sensual, tasty, rigorous, clean and sincere"!!!!
- The espresso must also be large, rich, vivid, valuable, and fragrant in taste and progressive in the way that various flavors evolve in succession which delights those in search of new thrills and emotions.



- The crema must be like a "tight sweater", with very fine bubbles if any at all and be of a height of between 2 and 4 millimeters thick.
- The crema must also remain for a long time on the surface without breaking around the center or the edge of the cup.
- The Italian National Espresso Institute states that the perfect cappuccino should have 25 ml of espresso and 125 ml of steamed/frothed milk.

- The froth should be white, thick and rich in sweetness and have a velvety texture with the lack any surface bubbles.
- The cappuccino should have hints of dried fruit, toasted cereal and caramel, while the body of the drink should have an almost imperceptible acidity.

Italians Drink 14 "Billion" cups of espresso a year and have over 280,000 qualified baristas. Think they take this stuff serious?





A lot of the outcome for the **perfect** cup of espresso or cappuccino will rest on the expertise, experience and passion of the barista. Some other elements might include the espresso blend itself, the water, the preparation techniques of the barista, storage of the coffee and the cleanliness of the equipment and accessories used. The best coffee comes from the best beans and the way that they are handled and prepared by the barista!

The bottom line is this; **“It’s all about tradition”** for the Italians. They have for sure proven to the world that they make the best espresso and cappuccino. We only wish that we had the same passion, tradition and experience in America to be worried about the name sake of our coffee and espresso drinks.

We can only hope that for the sake of espresso and baristas around the world that this new Italian commissions concern for the tradition and quality of the espresso based drinks will cause a world wide movement that stands to keep the tradition of this beloved gift of Italy from going mainstream. So let’s jump on the espresso band wagon and do our part to ensure that we don’t fall pray to the “big chain” mentality and marketing of what the definition of “traditional” espresso drinks are.



If you need some help defining or fine tuning your espresso drink menu and/or techniques, please so not hesitate to contact your staff at Upper Midwest Gourmet. We have a combined 40 plus years of experienced staff ready to assist you.

Good luck, save tradition and never stop learning and perfecting your skills.

Sincerely,

The UMG staff

