

MASTER

BY SUSIE THEODOROU
PHOTOGRAPHER: ULRIKE HOLSTEN

of Cappuccino & Latte Macchiato

In the mix. To celebrate the launch of the Aeroccino, Nespresso serves you the story of the perfect Cappuccino. Sweetened with tips from some of New York's best Baristas, selected by coffee-enthusiast Susie Theodorou.

The credit for inventing Cappuccino is given to the Capuchin order of friars – fact or myth, who knows? The friars' long pointed cowls certainly resemble a perfectly finished Cappuccino: heaps of froth sitting on the nutty coloured Espresso crema, the base of the froth stained with a rich dark, coffee ring. It could be true! All I can say is I'm glad someone did invent it.

According to the Italians, Cappuccino is a breakfast to mid-morning drink, with 12 noon as cut off time. That seems to be one of the only limitations though, seeing as there are a few interesting Italian variations of the Cappuccino. One may find a Cappuccino Chiaro – a lighter in strength Cappuccino with less Espresso than the traditional one-third dose and two-thirds steamed frothed milk. Cappuccino Scuro, meanwhile, is a dark Cappuccino made with a doppio (double Espresso) and one-third steamed frothed milk; it's not a Macchiato, which only requires a spoonful of dry foam. You will also find a Caffè con panna, an Espresso with a dollop of steamed frothed cream. It's quite amazing how one can really taste the difference between a good and a bad Cappuccino by the frothing of the milk. Even after the tenth Cappuccino in one day, I could tell from the first sip whether it was going to be a good or bad one. Tight air bubbles sat on the surface of the cup, with a little of the nutty coffee colour just rising to the surface. On sipping, the milk, froth and

Espresso were one and the Espresso on the bottom was filtered through a thick, smooth texture with just the correct amount of aroma coming through with each mouthful.

Now, in hindsight, and as the experienced Cappuccino taster that I am, I have discovered that the big milky air bubbles and froth let the coffee come through in a watery state. If too much steam (actually water from the steam) is released into the milk, it will not only scorch the milk but also make it too watery, thus creating these large air bubbles – not what one needs for the perfect Cappuccino. On drinking a Cappuccino with large air bubbles, you will notice that the milk and coffee are almost separate, with two taste sensations instead of one.

I selected a variety of cafés to test the Cappuccinos, including four places that I have sub-consciously returned to over and over again during my 5-year stay in New York City.

On this particular day, I chose a seat which had a good clear view of the Barista in action every time. The Espresso was made first. Then cold milk was sloshed into a metal pitcher and the steaming spout immersed in the milk. I could hear a loud frothing noise and within seconds this rumble turned into a dull hum and there was a turning of the steam valve (thereby reducing the level at which it entered the milk). After that the pitcher was tilted or moved up and down.



New Nespresso Aeroccino

Being compact in size, cordless and boasting a stainless steel finish, the Aeroccino stands out amongst other small kitchen appliances. This convenient device for preparing rich milk froth and hot milk features two dedicated whisks for each requirement, one of which is fixed under the lid. Simplicity is key: Fix the appropriate whisk to the inside of the jug, fill it with fresh cold milk (ideally 8°C) up to the mark and press the button. It's ready as soon as the back-lit button turns off! That's it. Always ready, the Aeroccino can be used at the same time as making coffee: One Cappuccino cup or one Latte Macchiato glass are both ready in 1 minute – always to the desired temperature of between 75 – 85°C at the push of only one button. You can prepare three cycles in a row without waiting and, if need be, easily change the whisks in-between. The heating and/ or frothing process is started and stopped by pressing the same button. This smart device is very quiet in use and easily cleaned. We've saved the best for last: To order an Aeroccino simply turn to the mail order section on page 76.

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The temperature of the milk was felt by touching the side of the pitcher. All this took seconds. The spout was out of the milk and wiped with a clean cloth. The pitcher was given a quick tap or two. Then the milk was immediately poured on to the Espresso, the Barista's hand almost shaking out the milk and froth from the pitcher making it land gently, in pillows. It was the perfect Cappuccino. There was no pouring of milk first and then spooning fake froth on top of the Espresso. Miguel Reiban and Augustin Mota, both long serving Baristas at Terramare Café on the Upper East-side, stated: "If you have to spoon the foam on to a Cappuccino it's a sign of badly foamed milk." They were quick to add that you do have to spoon foam on to a Macchiato or a dry Cappuccino. Molly Pryor, a Barista for 5 years at Ino in the West Village, adds: "If you need to spoon foam, it means the milk is only foamed on top."

"Listen to the rumble of the milk and as it lowers in pitch, cut back on the steam and tilt the pitcher at an angle to the spout in the milk. This will send the milk swirling in a circular motion, evenly distributing the tiny bubbles in it. Feel the side of the pitcher to make sure the temperature is not too hot", explains Joe Rondinone, a Barista for about 6 years, who makes coffees in a small coffee bean store and café in Soho. Baristas worth their weight in gold use their senses rather than temperature gauges. When asked about which temperature the milk needs to be frothed to, they all agree on around 60–65 °C (140–150 °F). I have never seen a single temperature gauge on any of the pitchers of any of my four favourite cafés. Reaz Islam, a Barista at Grace's food market, no longer thinks about how to froth milk perfectly: "I can froth milk with my eyes shut," he claims. "I steam and froth at least 24 litres of

milk a day." None of the Baristas have attended a coffee-making course; they all learned their trade on the job from the owners of these establishments, who pride themselves on the coffee they serve. However, they all agree that one does need to be using an excellent machine and only using good coffee goes without saying! They all care for their coffee machines with pride.

Finally, I also tasted skimmed and soymilk Cappuccinos and enquired about them. Skimmed milk can be frothed well but will give a lighter textured froth. Molly Pryor sometimes opts for a skimmed milk Cappuccino simply because she desires that particular, lighter texture. Reiban and Mota, from Terramare, said: "you just cannot froth soymilk; it's all air and no texture." The popularity of Espresso cuisine has brought about many clever innovations to help heat and froth milk at home. I'm an enthusiastic Cappuccino maker at home – switching between the Aerolatte (the battery operated wand), the Cafetière-style milk frother and the steaming device on my coffee machine. And now the Aeroccino heats and froths as little or as much milk as you may need. It is a simple steel pitcher that resembles a large insulated coffee mug and sits on an electrical base for energy. It comes with two attachments: a frothing whisk for heating and frothing milk for Cappuccinos and a non-frothing whisk just to heat milk for Caffelattes. In contrast to some other methods, the milk does not spill everywhere nor do foam and steam come flying out the pitcher. It also cleans very easily, no corners or burnt caramelised milk anywhere. So you can now be a real Barista in the comfort of your own home by simply relying on the "automatic sense" of the Aeroccino and your tried and trusted Nespresso machine. Good news indeed. ☕



Coffee Recipes

Get creative with your Aeroccino and try out these delicious milky and frothy coffee variations, exclusively developed by Susie Theodorou.

Vanilla Latte Macchiato

A good drink for mid-morning or bedtime – decaffeinated may be called for here.

1 capsule of Ristretto or Decaffeinato Intenso (20 ml, i.e. a half-filled Espresso cup), 100 ml whole milk, 1/2 teaspoon vanilla bean paste or seeds from 1/2 vanilla pod

Method: Make the Espresso. Put the milk and vanilla seeds or paste into the Aeroccino fitted with the frothing device. Cover and heat. Pour the milk into a tall heatproof glass and pour the Espresso down one side of the glass: it will slowly slide down, staining the milk with coffee. Serve.

Cuban-style Café con leche

A great Winter breakfast served with toast.

1 capsule of Vivalto (110 ml), 75 ml whole or skimmed milk, 1-2 tablespoons evaporated sweetened condensed milk

Method: Prepare the Vivalto in a Cappuccino cup or tall thin mug. Add the milk and evaporated condensed milk to the Aeroccino fitted with the heating device, close and heat. Pour the milk over the coffee. Serve. No extra sweetener is needed!

Corretto Macchiato

"Corrected" with a dash of Amaretto, Sambuca or Grappa then topped with a spoonful of enriched froth – a perfect way to end dinner.

1 capsule of Roma or Decaffeinato Intenso (40 ml), 30 ml light cream (single), 1/2 to 1 teaspoon liqueur

Method: Prepare the Espresso in a small Espresso glass. Add the light cream to the Aeroccino fitted with the frothing device. Add the liqueur to the prepared Espresso and top with a heaping spoonful of froth. Serve.

After Dinner Mocha Macchiato

As tasty as any dessert – just remember to serve with a spoon to scoop out the delicious melted chocolate in the cup!

15 g dark chocolate (min. 70% cocoa), 1 capsule of Livanto or Decaffeinato Intenso (40 ml), 30 ml whole milk, grated chocolate

Method: Break the chocolate into 2-3 pieces and place in an Espresso cup. Dispense the Espresso directly over the chocolate. Froth the milk in the Aeroccino fitted with the frothing device. Drop a large spoonful of froth over the Espresso then sprinkle with grated chocolate to serve.

