

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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A Good Cup of Coffee

For most people, there's no better end to a good meal than a great cup of coffee. So why, if you can get great coffee at the coffee shop or a restaurant, can't you always manage the same thing at home? You might have tried a dozen different brands and roasts of coffee. Maybe they taste good the first couple of times, but then they're the same as all the others. Why does home coffee often have a sour or bitter strange flavor that you never notice when you're eating out?

Maybe you keep thinking that you just have to keep trying other brands, until you find the coffee shop secret. But often the answer lies not so much in the coffee you choose as in how clean your coffee maker is! I'm not saying you don't wash the coffee pot! But if you don't get into the cracks and crevices of the pot, the basket for the ground coffee and even the drip spout, you might be picking up off-flavors.

The problem with coffee is that it has oil. Coffee beans are like many other beans, nuts and seeds containing oil. You may have even noticed a little sheen of oil on the surface of a freshly brewed cup of coffee once in awhile. It gives coffee some of its distinctive flavor. And there is little enough that you don't need to worry about any calories.

But when that oil gets into the corners, nooks and crannies of a coffee pot it will sit there. The longer it sits and the more often it gets warmed by the next pot of coffee, the sooner it will turn rancid. Just like cooking oil can start to get a strong odor to it or

smell like old paint, so will coffee oils develop stronger flavors. They might not smell or taste like paint, but they will ruin the flavor of good coffee. And the more sensitive your nose and taste are, the sooner you will notice the bad flavors.

What that means is before your next cup of coffee, take the coffee pot apart. Use a brush with hot soapy water to scrub as much of it as you can get to. The brush really helps to get in between the ridges in the basket that holds the filter. Work on all the parts that the liquid coffee might touch. Then rinse it all, a couple of times, to remove all the detergent. If it's been awhile since the basket was scrubbed you might want to run it once without the coffee, just clear water, to give it a final rinse. Then get ready to enjoy your next cup. The more often you make coffee, the more often the scrubbing needs to be repeated. Sorry for the extra work, but you'll taste the difference.

Yes, buying a decent coffee to start will improve the flavor. There are some special, rare coffee beans that are selling for \$500 a pound. You certainly don't need to go that far! Just find one that suits your taste. If you can manage it, buy whole beans and grind them just before you brew your potful.

You do need to store the beans or ground coffee in an airtight container. Air, light and moisture will all change the flavor of the coffee. But coffee experts do say that we should NOT store coffee in the freezer or refrigerator. Coffee oils can be damaged by freezing. The beans can pick up flavors from other food in the freezer or 'fridge. More importantly, the moisture pick up will be absorbed into the beans and change the flavor.

They also say that if you do, once in awhile, have to put extra coffee in the freezer, when you take it out to use do not put it back in. The more often the can or bag

goes into and out of the freezer the worse the flavor will be because it will pick up moisture each time.

If you're in the mood for a luscious coffee punch for your holiday party, here's the drink for you. It's not low calorie, so don't over-indulge. You could use a low calorie sweetener, but most of the calories come from the cream, so it won't make a big difference. But for coffee lovers, this will be a treat.

Coffee Punch

2 quarts freshly brewed and cooled strong coffee	2 cups milk
½ cup sugar (or low cal equivalent)	1 tsp vanilla extract
1 cup whipping cream	1 cup dark rum optional
1 quart vanilla or chocolate ice cream	

Combine the coffee, milk, sugar and vanilla in bowl and stir until sugar dissolves. Cover and chill in the refrigerator until serving time. To serve, stir the whipping cream and rum into the coffee. Put the ice cream by scoops into the punch bowl and pour the coffee mixture over top. Ladle into cups to serve. Makes 20 servings, 6 oz and 130 calories each.