



# 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES WHEN ROASTING COFFEE





## Common mistakes when roasting your coffee

Mistakes happen in the roastery process. Whether they're caused by humans or are equipment-related, they happen. The good news is that there are ways to limit, mitigate, and sometimes completely avoid these issues altogether.

Understanding the errors that are made during roasting and guarding against them is a large part of helping your green coffee beans reach their full potential.

We have put together 10 of the most common mistakes made when roasting to help you improve your own coffee roasting.





## #1 Starting with inexperienced roasters

Experience is a large part of any skill set, and coffee roasting is no different. A common trend is cafes beginning a roasting program with an inexperienced roaster. The customer suffers because they're paying the same price as an expert roaster and getting coffees that are being roasted by someone learning on the fly.

Without an adequate baseline of roasting knowledge, the coffee produced can be subpar. This may not live up to your clients expectations, negatively affecting your brand and putting your expensive equipment at risk.

- If you're transitioning into roasting, take your time with a new roastery startup.
- Speak to your roasting machine provider regarding training.
- Utilise all the literature and online resources available and hire experienced roasters – even if just to mentor your staff.

This will ensure your clients get quality coffee. Your company will be rewarded with brand loyalty and ultimately, increased sales.

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## #2 Losing focus

Every roaster out there has had the batch that got away. Preparing the next load, getting preoccupied with packaging, and falling down a social media rabbit hole are all things that can take a roaster's attention away from the task at hand.

Focusing on the beans is the roaster's primary job.

- If multitasking is necessary, keep it to a minimum.
- Minimize potential distractions in your immediate proximity, keep your phones off, and close unnecessary windows on your computer.
- The benefits for the coffee produced and the minimized green bean wastage are worth these small sacrifices.

For larger companies, it's the management's responsibility to keep from rushing the roasters. Allow sufficient time for the roasters to do their job. There's a finite amount of coffee a roastery can produce given the equipment and staff on-hand. Understanding that and allowing some buffer time, keeps staff from becoming overwhelmed. This will also increase morale, which will produce a more consistent, better quality roast.

## #3 Rushed warm-ups

Experienced roasters know the challenges of the day's first roast. The machine needs to be brought up to the same charge temperature that it will be run at for the remaining day's batches.

Knowing your machine well is important during warm-up. While temperature probes can quickly read the correct charge temperature, they don't take into account the thermal energy of the entire roaster. Rushed warm-ups will cause a lower heat drop than expected when beans are loaded, requiring heating compensation or having to extend the overall roast. This will change the entire roast profile.

There are several ways to ensure a more complete warm-up. You can heat the drum well above charge temperature, and then allow it to cool multiple times before the first load. Alternately, you can let the machine idle above charge temperature for 15 to 20 minutes before dropping to charge temperature.

Whatever your technique, your roaster warm-up should never be rushed, or your coffee quality will suffer.



## #4 Not cupping your roasts

A solid quality control regime requires continual cupping of your production roasts. However, cupping can serve to check more than just the treatment of your particular roast.

Cupping is important for more than just ensuring adherence to your own roast profiles. It can act as a 'meta-cupping' to check that your roast profiles are in line with your preferred and respected flavour profiles, and your roastery's vision as a whole.

## #5 No Between Batch Protocol (BBP)

To achieve consistent quality coffee, a roaster needs to identify all the variables at play, so they can be controlled and standardized.

BBP is important for a constant roast and to minimize defects. If the drum is too hot when your next batch of green beans are loaded, scorching can occur. If the drum is allowed to cool too much, it will take longer to achieve first crack and alter the roast profile of the next batch. A consistent BBP is a big part of a consistent roast profile and minimizing roast defects.



## #6 Complacency

Success can build complacency, but can slowly create loss of customers. Just because you've been roasting a certain way for many years, doesn't mean it can't be done better. Questioning and refining your own process will only benefit your roastery and ultimately produce a better coffee.

To be the best roaster possible, you have to be aware of what's happening in the industry. With all the platforms available for staying connected, there's no excuse not to. Between social media, podcasts, industry publications, events, and print media. It just takes a little effort to continually learn and refine your techniques.

## #7 Not dealing with defects

Often, you'll find physical flaws in the beans themselves resulting from defective beans or roasting errors. This is something which should not be ignored. If there are issues with the beans themselves you will never create the roast you want, even if your process is perfect.



## #8 Overloading and underloading

Understanding the equipment you use and its capabilities comes with experience. Knowing the load capacity of your machine is essential.

A common mistake made by new roasters is not understanding the optimal batch size for your roaster.

Overloading a machine will make the roast take longer than it should and produce a baked, bland coffee.

Underload a roaster and the roast will be more difficult to control due to increased sensitivity to heat. This will result in less bean mass, and an improper bean probe reading.



## #9 Roaster maintenance

Purchasing a roaster is a significant investment, and poor roaster hygiene puts both the health of the equipment and the quality of the coffee produced at risk. Roasted coffee produces oils that can spoil and become rancid. The off-gas from roasting can also get messy and fill the ventilation with thick tar.

Operating a dirty roaster is very hard on the machine. Oily build-up strains the motors, making them prone to breakdown. Airflow is reduced as material builds up in the ventilation. Even more serious is the risk of fire due to build-up of combustible materials in the roaster and ventilation system.

Run a batch of coffee (especially a lighter roast) through dirty equipment and the beans will pick up an array of negative flavours.

Set a maintenance schedule according to your manufacturer's recommendation and your machine usage, and then stick to it.

## #10 Not taking notes

Finally, one of the most basic, but possibly the most important mistakes made in the roasting process is not taking notes.

It is easy for roasters to think they will remember their routines and procedures, however it is inevitable that at one stage things will be forgotten.

Without proper note taking it can be impossible to replicate that perfect batch. Even with automation to save settings it is always important to take notes, even if these are basic referral points to ensure consistent and successful batches time and time again.



## Conclusion

In conclusion, there are a range of factors which should be considered throughout the roasting process. It takes time to perfect your roasting process, however if you can eliminate these 10 common errors, you will be in a much better position when it comes to finding and replicating your ideal roast.

There are many different roasting techniques, and each roaster will have their own successful operations. Over time experience is key and if you continue to improve your processes the results will show.

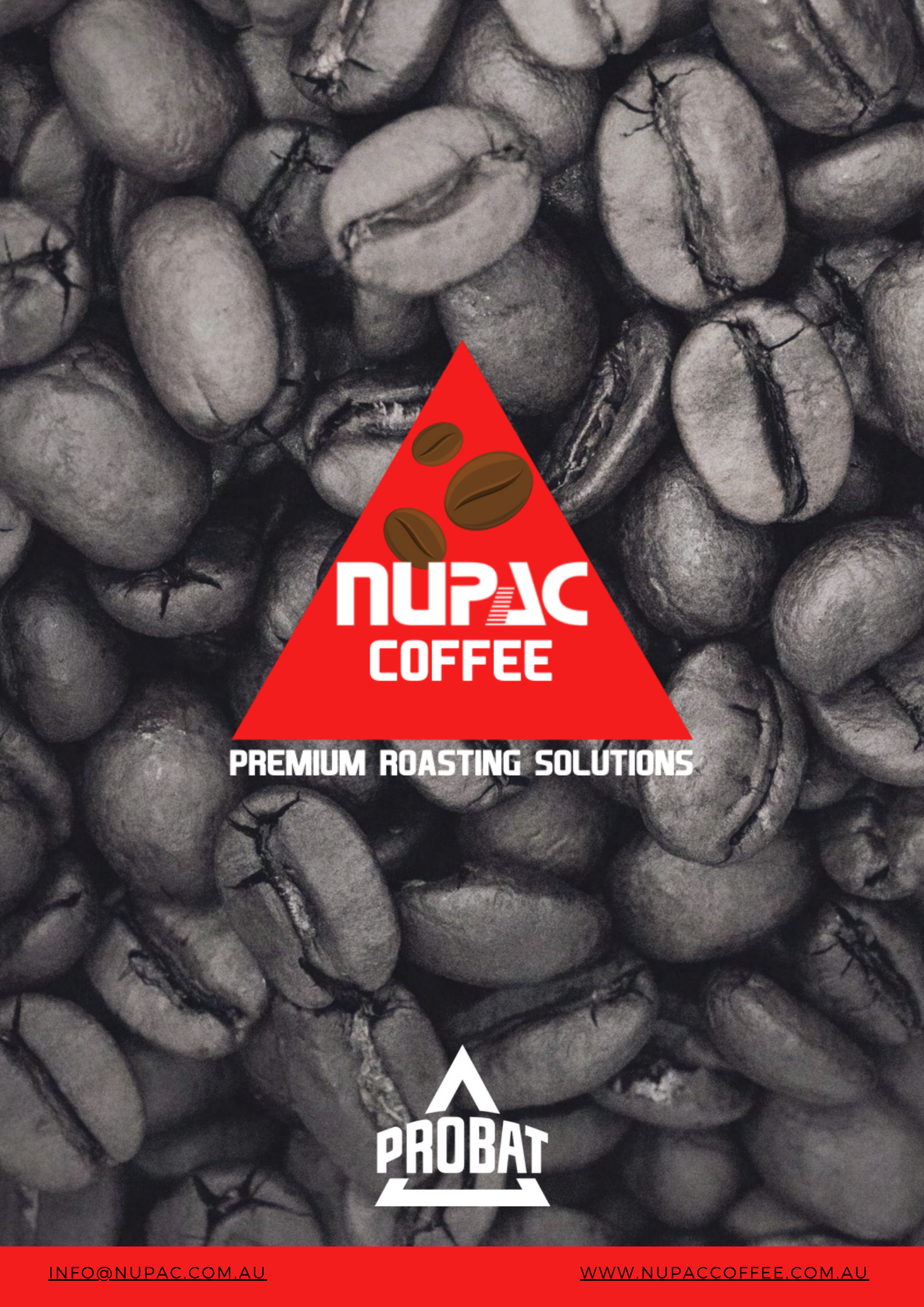
It is also important to ensure you reach out for training and help when necessary. Especially to solution providers, they should always be happy to provide assistance.

At Nupac Coffee we set up training sessions and provide detailed information to help our customers perfect their roasts on their PROBAT machines.

We hope these tips were helpful. Happy roasting!







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