**Common mistakes when roasting your coffee**

Mistakes happen in the roastery. 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.

**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 will be off-putting for clients, negatively affect your brand, and put your expensive equipment at risk.

If you’re transitioning into roasting, take your time with a new roastery startup. Utilize all the literary 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.

## Losing focus

Every roaster out there has had the batch that got away from them. 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 keep staff from becoming overwhelmed increasing morale will produce a more consistent, better quality roast.

## 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 days 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 then 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.

## No Between Batch Protocol (BBP)

To achieve a 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## Not dealing with defects

Often, you’ll find physical flaws in the beans themselves resulting from defective beans or roasting errors. Although not the primary focus of this article, it’s necessary to mention them.