

The Moka Pot

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Definition:

Beginning the morning with a cup of coffee is part of daily life for many, be it at home, at a cafe, or on the go. Most people enjoy making their coffee at home, and because of that many people have their own routines and ways of making their ‘perfect cup’. The Moka Pot is essentially a percolator, using pressure to move boiling water through espresso grinds to make coffee. It is meant to be a simple machine for at-home use to make espresso style coffee.

Overview:

The Moka Pot comes in different sizes and varieties, the 3-cup pot stands at just under 6 inches, and is 3.3 inches in diameter, this doesn’t include the handle. Overall it weighs only 13 ounces because it is made of aluminum.(7) When looking at the pot, there are three main separable parts, the bottom, and top chamber which can both be seen from the outside, but when unscrewed from each other, reveals the filter funnel that rests on the brim of the bottom chamber. The shape is similar to an hourglass in that it is wide at the top and bottom, and thinnest in the middle.

Components:

The three main separable parts of the Moka pot can be further broken down into its 10 subparts, all of equal importance to the execution of the espresso style coffee we seek out. All components can be seen named and labeled in *Figure 1*. The bottom chamber, fully made of aluminum, which is typically an octagonal shape getting thinner towards the opening, is made up of two different parts, the heating vessel and the valve. The heating vessel is the stove will make its heat contact to the pot. It is hollow on the inside,



Figure 1

mostly adopting the same shape of the outside. The bottom, which is flat on the inside and outside, is heat conducted to boil the water inside the chamber, without evaporating it. The valve, which is visible both internally and externally, in the shape of a hexagon sitting towards the top of one of the eight sides of the bottom chamber, is one of the most critical components of the whole pot. This is because the valve helps to regulate the amount of pressure built-up within the pot, by releasing excess steam in order to withstand a buildup and possible explosion. It was placed in a spot on the bottom vessel to also help measure the amount of water that one would use. The filter funnel fits inside of the bottom chamber, resting its outer rim on the inner rim of the bottom chamber.

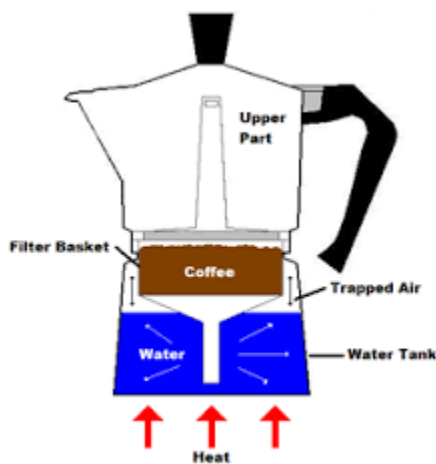


Figure 2

The filter funnel is made of aluminum, from the outside the top part of the funnel is a short, wide cylinder, then thins into a longer thinner cylinder. It can best be visualized in *Figure 2*. Looking in from the top, the flat filter separating the wide cylinder from the coning-in section of the funnel is visible. This filter is where the coffee grounds will be packed into.

The rest of the components are all attached to the top chamber, however the next two components are sometimes attached parts depending on the make and model of the pot. Those two components are the gasket and the filter plate. A gasket is made of rubber or silicone and has a main function of creating a seal between the three large separable components when the top and bottom chambers are screwed together. The filter plate, which is different from the filter within the funnel, is attached to the bottom of the top chamber, and it is used to keep the coffee

grounds in place, while allowing the coffee to move up into the small column. The small column is made of aluminum and located in the center of the coffee collector. It is a mostly closed, hollow cylinder, the openings are at the top, where the coffee will come out. This component is where the coffee is pushed through into the coffee collector, when there is no more liquid coming from the column going into the collector, the air bubbles make a sputtering noise, this is the key to knowing your coffee is finished. The aforementioned coffee collector is the component in which our final product will end up. It is also made of aluminum and acts as a catching basket for the coffee inside of the top chamber. To ensure that no coffee escapes during the brewing process, an aluminum lid, which is attached to the outside of the coffee collector and a handle by a pin. The lid is able to be lifted open and shut by its thermoplastic knob that is screwed into the center on the lid. The thermoplastic allows for heat resistance and makes it possible to check on your coffee as it's brewing. The last component of the Moka Pot is the incredibly important handle. Made of thermoplastic, like the knob, it is made to be able to touch the pot without injury. It is attached to the outside of the coffee collector and the lid. The handle is shaped with an intended curve to fit a hand as it grasps it for comfort. The handle is used to lift and move the pot with convenience.

Explanation:

To use the Moka Pot we must first take the three main components apart by twisting the top chamber to open it. Once the top chamber is unscrewed from the bottom, the filter funnel must be removed. Fill the bottom chamber with cold to room-temperature water up to level with the bottom of the valve. Put the filter back into the bottom chamber how it was when it was whole, with the thinner part toward the bottom and the larger opening with the visible filter facing up. Take a favorite ground coffee, preferably ground for an espresso maker, and fill the funnel with



Figure 3

Place the Moka Pot on the stovetop, and turn the dial to a low heat, as seen in *Figure 3*. Now, we wait while the Moka Pot does its job. Once we hear the sputtering noise of the air bubbles, we



Figure 4

can turn the heat off and remove the pot from the burner, placing it on a cool one, or somewhere that can withstand the heat of the bottom. Now, we can lift the lid to see the creation as depicted in *Figure 4*. Pour your coffee into a cup or mug before rinsing each of the three separable parts with hot water.

Conclusion:

When looking for an at-home espresso machine, the Moka pot is a tried and true classic that has been around for 90 years. Invented by Luigi di Ponti in 1933 however, Ponti isn't known for the invention, the man he sold the patent to became the name behind the pot, Alfonso Bialetti who was known to be an aluminum machinist. Cafe culture in Italy is extremely important, but in the 1930s there was an economic downturn and people couldn't afford the culture they loved, this invention gave them access to the coffee without the cost. According to Clayton (3) there is a

Bialetti legend that “the machine was inspired by early clothes-washing machines which used a heat source to boil a pail of sudsy water and cause it to rise up out of a tube, which could be aimed at soiled laundry”. It revolutionized enjoying espresso coffee at home in the Italian household, and has proven to do the same today all over the world. By being smaller, and lighter than a classic espresso machine, it took the inconvenience of the cost, and bulk away from the experience. When it comes to being user-friendly and dependable the Moka Pot has shown that it can withstand a lot. It’s both simple design, and complex withstanding give it a lot to be impressed by. The classic Bialetti is retailed at €30.90 and can be found for less by competitors, which personally I believe to be extremely reasonable given how well they last and the quality of the coffee that can come from it. Although it doesn’t have the bells and whistles of an espresso machine, the quality of espresso that is pulled is delicious and of very similar caliber that makes the convenience more than worth it.

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