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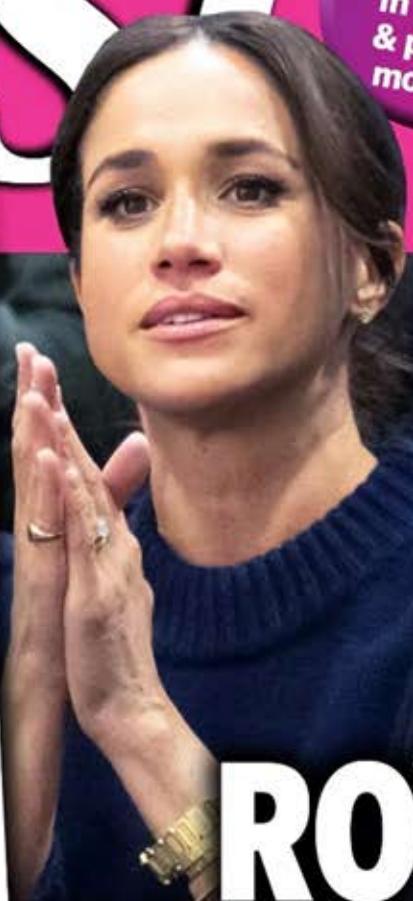
DAVINA

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for 2026





Coaltown
Roastery
offer courses

recipes, brewing basics and milk techniques.

I learnt a whole encyclopaedia of impressive terms – extraction theory, grinder calibration...

Even when you've successfully got your shot, what do you do with it? Knock it back as an espresso, add more hot water for an Americano, milk for a latte, cappuccino or flat white, macchiato, ristretto? I refuse to countenance the 'babycino', milk froth served to grizzling toddlers who want to 'share' in the coffee-drinking experience.

And then there's the milk. How to heat it, froth it, pour it and make those fancy flowers, hearts, swans and other pretty patterns in the foam. I was exhausted and hadn't so much as sniffed a bean yet.

Alysha asked us to step up to the machine one at a time. My fellow students had produced a lovely cup. Then it was my turn...

In front of me was a big, shiny La Marzocco. One model is for sale on Coaltown's website for £4,240. The complementary grinder is another £1,035.

Don't tell him I said this, but Morphy is, well, functional, shall we say. He's got the parts you need – water tank, baskets, tamper, frothing wand jobbie. But it's like comparing a Ferrari with a Fiat 126 (my first car).

So, I went through the steps Alysha taught us, paying particular attention to tamping my dose.

A wonky tamper is no good to anyone. Your mission is to squidge

down so the coffee is level and hot water runs through it evenly and thoroughly, extracting flavour as it goes.

Under extract and your cuppa will be thin in taste; over extract and it'll be bitter.

Coffee nerdery can extend to spending loads of dosh on a specially weighted tamper that snuggly fits your basket.

You can get machines that allow you to adjust the time it takes for the water to flow through your dose, and equally high-tech grinders with dials to change the coarseness of your coffee.

Another vital piece of equipment I don't have is good scales to weigh out my beans or coffee rather than just guess an amount – probably why my drinks are so yuck.

So, now for the milk... Alysha helped me put the steamy nozzle thingy in the milk jug to the right level, and telltale chirruping sounds told me it was ready.

I carefully poured it into my coffee cup and attempted a bit of milk art at the end. Alysha created a beautiful tulip. At the right angle, my effort looked a bit like Boris

Johnson. But it tasted alright. I was very proud.

I arrived home with proper coffee for Morphy – Coaltown sells a wide range of delicious coffees, even decaf – headed towards the kitchen and my poor neglected little machine, and flicked the 'on' switch. Now, where's me tamper, I thought...

“
**WHO
KNEW
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TO
MAKING
A GREAT
BREW?**
”

● GETTING THERE

Coaltown Academy offers coffee-making experiences priced £65-£95pp, coaltowncoffee.co.uk.
Stay just 20 minutes away at the comfortable Cawdor Hotel, Llandeilo. Double rooms from £115 per night with breakfast, thecawdor.com. For more great things to do locally, from yoga and meditation to coastal foraging and tea tasting, visit discover carmarthenshire.com

ALYSHA'S TOP COFFEE TIPS

1 Keep your coffee machine and equipment clean.

2 Don't use a food blender to grind beans. It's worth investing in a proper grinder with the ability to adjust the size of the grounds.

3 The best coffee-to-water ratio to make one shot of espresso is 18g of coffee to 36g of liquid.

4 Invest in proper, accurate scales.

5 Don't be rough with your tamp – if you create a crack in your dose the hot water will whizz through too quickly, failing to extract flavour.

6 Don't overfill your milk jug. Listen for a telltale chirruping sound that tells you the milk is frothing up, but not overheating.

7 You can use oat, soya or almond milk, but make sure you buy barista editions.

8 When using a cafetière, don't press the plunger fully down. Steep for four minutes, stir the crust, then transfer to a carafe to serve. This ensures the coffee grinds are not over-extracted, and your second cup of coffee will taste the same as the first.

9 Using filtered water for your coffee is a game-changer for your brew.

10 Book a course at Coaltown to polish your skills!



My new life as a barrister, sorry, barista!

This year, learn how to make the perfect coffee at the Welsh roastery now offering a range of specialist courses...

So, you know that fancy coffee machine you got for Christmas that you still haven't managed to get a decent beverage out of?

Yep, I've got one of those in my kitchen, too. I've used it maybe twice in seven years and produced dishwater masquerading as macchiato.

Now, Morphy (as in Richards) sits there and glares at me every time I head for the kettle and grab the jar of Alta Rica. After all, you only need a mug and a spoon for a cup of instant.

But oh the joy of a proper coffee, eh? Deep, rich flavour, frothy hot milk, maybe a sprinkle of chocolate or a bit of artistic foam-ery on top...

It's blooming expensive these days to buy one from your "insert your favourite coffee shop here", so it makes sense to DIY.

The good news is this year you

If there's one thing I've learned
You're never too old to learn a new skill!

could learn how to be a brill barista from absolute professionals.

Coaltown Roastery in South Wales has launched a new extended range of training courses, where you can learn how to produce the best cup of coffee of your life in the comfort of your own home.

Coaltown opened in Ammanford, Carmarthenshire, in 2018. The town's economy was once fuelled by coal production, but the last collieries closed in 2003.

Founder Scott James and family set up the roastery with the hope of creating jobs for local people around a new 'black gold' - coffee, that is.

As well as the roastery, which supplies a variety of delicious coffees to a wealth of businesses and subscribers, the site has a great café and an upstairs area where training courses are staged.

You can choose from a Home Barista Workshop, Advanced Barista Espresso Workshop, Basic Milk Techniques and Advanced Latte Art (for smartypants who have already acquired solid milk-texturing skills).

Then there's Brewing & Filter Coffee Basics and, at the other end of the scale, a Sensory Workshop to help aficionados sharpen their coffee palates. Training lasts from three to four hours and costs £65-£95.

I plumped for the four-hour Home Barista Workshop, under the guidance of head trainer, Alysha Huxley. It's perfect for those like me with an espresso set-up at home.

Within 20 minutes I knew why my coffee is usually so yuck...

Who knew there was so much science to making a great brew?

Alysha took us through coffee origins, assorted processing practices, the theory of espresso