

## The Curiosity of Cold Brew: What the Heck?

By Jenn Sturiale

Well, my friend, we did it. Made it through another long, dark - and did I mention long? - winter in one piece, and we have EARNED the magical Springtime heading our way. Happy yellow daffodils! Lil' green buds bursting on branches! And the surest sign of all: cold brew coffee reappearing on every coffeehouse menu.

If you're not exactly sure what the Coldbrew Cult is all about, here's the deal: when you slowly steep ground coffee in room temperature water, you'll get a silky-smooth, highly caffeinated and lower-acidity elixir that'll knock yer socks off!

Of all the ways to brew coffee, the cold brew method is the absolute winner... in that it's the absolute loser. It is, by far, the *slowest way to brew coffee*. When you have a need for speed, fo sho break out your trusty Aeropress. But when you can manage just a teeny bit of advance planning? Your life will improve by approximately ONE BILLION PERCENT.

Sure, you can purchase one of those schmancy cold brew contraptions, but it's honestly not necessary. All you need is a glass container in which to steep the brew and another to filter and store it. Use the glass carafe of your everyday coffee machine, repurpose that pretty cocktail pitcher or head to a kitchen supply shop for some inexpensive glass jars.

There's one thing you gotta keep in mind: cold-brewing produces a *very strong coffee concentrate*. Meant to be diluted with either hot or cold water and/or your favorite milk, it's dense and powerful, and a little goes a long way. Tempted to have just one more cold brew at 6pm? Well, I tried to warn you.

You'll love how easy it is to make up a batch: combine ground coffee with water, let it sit, then filter and bottle it. There are a few guidelines to keep in mind – but no absolute formulas, so tweak until you hit on a recipe you love... and then write it down.

Here's our Ultimate Guide to the Best Cold Brew in the Whole Universe in 7 Easy Steps:

1. Start with whole bean coffee and grind it coarser than usual. Really.
2. Combine the ground coffee and water in your glass steeping vessel. Experiment with the coffee-to-water ratio: some swear by a 4:1 ratio (80% water to 20% coffee) while others prefer a 3:1 or even 2:1. Remember: the more coffee you add the stronger, more caffeinated – and more expensive – your concentrate will be.
3. Optional: get fancy! Mix in a few broken cinnamon sticks, crushed cardamom pods, some cocoa powder or vanilla extract. You can even add sugar now – it'll dissolve nicely and you won't have to suffer the tragedy of sugar granules in your cold coffee.
4. Mix it all up and wait a few minutes for the grounds to get fully saturated, then mix again. You can forget about it or return to mix once in awhile.
5. Decide how long to steep: no less than 8 hours, with 12 – 16 hours considered preferable. I've gone up to 24 hours, resulting in a stronger concentrate.
6. Ready to filter? One easy way is to place a pour-over cone above your storage container and pour the brew into it, emptying the grounds from the filter as needed. Seal the container tightly and store it in the fridge for up to two weeks.
7. Party time! Fill a glass approximately halfway with cold brew concentrate, then add water (cold or hot) and milk to taste. Experiment with ratios until you find the perfect cold brew of your dreams. Then call me – I'll be there in 10!