

# Two Great Timesaving Gadgets for the Home

What could be better than a good cup of coffee and a clean home?

Well, how about making the coffee in less than a minute and barely lifting a finger to clean the house?

By Daniel Saltzman

Imagine brewing up an aromatic, tasty cup of your favorite coffee almost instantly and with zero mess. Then visualize sipping your fresh-brewed beverage on an easy chair as a robot vacuums your house. Is this the future?

If so, the future is now. Meet the Keurig B50 Brewer (\$175) and iRobot's Roomba Discovery vacuum (\$250). These two new entries into the household small-electronics market will have you wondering just how far we are from a Jetsons-like existence.

## The Keurig B50 Brewer

Most of us who relish our morning cup of joe either (1) buy it from Starbucks or some other local joint at a couple bucks a pop, (2) brew it ourselves in a traditional coffeemaker and then face cleaning up the grounds, the pot and the related mess, or (3) we drink the coffee brewed at work. (Yuck!)

Drinking coffee becomes a cost-benefit analysis. You might like Starbucks' coffee, but it's expensive and there's often a lengthy wait in line. Home-brewed coffee is usually good (if it's not too old), but it's time-consuming and messy. Drinking coffee at work is free, but you get what you pay for. Most of us just live with our compromised coffee situations with-

out ever pondering the alternatives ... like the Keurig B50 Brewer.

The B50 Brewer produces a fresh, perfect cup of coffee in less than a minute with virtually nothing to clean. The brewer is always ready to brew and using it couldn't be easier. Here's how it works:

• **Step 1: Insert one of your favorite "K-Cups."** K-

Cups are similar in shape and a little bigger in size than a single-serving of cream.



Inside is a mini coffee filter, like the ones you use in a regular brewer, and fresh ground coffee or tea, of which there are over 100 varieties. Sealed up airtight, these K-Cups are packed in nitrogen so the fresh grinds are not exposed to air until the moment of brewing. Elapsed time: 5 seconds.

• **Step 2: Close the hatch.**

Closing the hatch reveals the B50's high-quality construction. It feels solid and smooth, like closing the door of a fine automobile. This is a well-made machine that's built to last. Elapsed time: 6 seconds.

• **Step 3: Select brew strength and size.** Choose either a regular 7.25-ounce cup or, for a more intense taste, a 5.25-ouncer. Filling a large travel mug for the road requires two cups, but still costs less than a *grande* at Starbucks, and no there's line in which to wait. Elapsed time: 7 seconds.

• **Step 4: Watch and sniff as the coffee brews.** Ahhhhhh, the aroma of fresh-brewed coffee, hardly a better smell out there. The Keurig vibrates a bit as it immediately heats water to about 195 degrees, brews your coffee and drips it directly into your cup. Elapsed time: 35 to 45 seconds.

• **Step 5: Lift the hatch, dispose of the K-Cup and enjoy.** There's nothing else to do. No mess, nothing to clean, just a great cup of coffee. Total elapsed time: 40 to 50 seconds.

If you can brew fresher coffee or tea faster with less mess, you must be George or Jane Jetson!

Initial setup is quick and painless thanks to an easy-to-read user guide. For those concerned about electricity costs, the B50 includes a timer easily programmed to have the brewer active

and ready only as needed. When idle, the B50 consumes about as much electricity as a 40-watt lightbulb.

Keurig's VP of Marketing Dave Manly points out that the B50's technology allows for fresher coffee, and unlike one-size-fits-all pots, with the B50, everyone has their own choice of flavor and strength.

"It's better than what you get in a supermarket store and at least equal to what you get in a retail store," he says. "We look forward to changing the way people drink coffee."

## The Roomba Discovery Robotic Vacuum

So now that you've freed up all that time formerly spent at the coffee shop, maybe you could squeeze in a good, thorough vacuuming of the house. OK, so you didn't save *that* much time ... or did you?

With the Roomba Discovery robotic vacuum you won't need much time at all. With Roomba at your command, keeping your home free of dirty floors is infinitely easier than in the old days (way back in the 20th century) with those clunky, heavy vacuums.

The Roomba vac is about the diameter of a medium pizza and three inches thick. When taken out of the box, the first thought that comes to mind is, "Wow!" According to Nancy Dussault, director of marketing for iRobot Corporation, the futuristic vacuum's manufacturer, Roomba is based on technology developed for the military. Roomba's cousins cleared land mines in Afghanistan and were the first robots ever used in ground combat. While Roomba won't be on any such mission, it will significantly cut the amount of time and effort spent vacuuming carpets and floors. Here's how it works:

• **Step 1: Charge Roomba's battery.** The Roomba Discovery kit comes with a three-hour battery and a charging base. A battery indicator tells you how much juice Roomba has left. If the battery runs low while in operation, Roomba finds its way to the base all by itself and docks to recharge.

• **Step 2: Clear room of all loose items.** Like a regular vacuum,



Roomba doesn't like lamp cords, paper clips, etc. Remove these from the floor. For area-rug tassels, tuck them under.

• **Step 3: Turn on the power.**

Place Roomba in the center of the room, turn it on and press the "Clean" button. Roomba surveys the room and begins cleaning. Pressing the "Spot" button tells Roomba to concentrate its efforts only on a 3-square-foot area.

• **Step 4: Watch in amazement, then go enjoy some Keurig coffee.**

Roomba needs very little human intervention. Roomba's round shape allows it to maneuver around and over almost any room's obstructions. It's low clearance takes it into places most vacuums never see, like under beds, tables and bureaus. Every now and then, especially in a cluttered room, Roomba does get stuck and you have to pick it up and send it back on its mission.

• **Step 5: Empty the bin and send Roomba home.** Roomba's easy-to-clean bin should be emptied after each use. Roomba can then be sent back to its charging base by pressing the "Clean" and "Spot" buttons at the same time or by placing it on the base manually.

Unlike the Keurig Brewer, the Roomba vac is not a complete replace-

ment for the traditional appliance. As Dussault points out, "Roomba is really made for 'maintenance.' You vacuum once a month and use Roomba the other three weeks." But if you are physically challenged, or simply have trouble bending and lifting, the Roomba is more than a timesaving frill – it's a must-have assistant. Roomba requires a fraction of the physical work required in traditional vacuuming.

## Making Life Just a Bit Easier

These gadgets are not inexpensive, but the time they save will not be unappreciated, and their quality construction and engineering should keep them running trouble-free for quite a while. And while they both could be considered updates of older products that we've used for years, they allow for uses not possible before.

Running late in the morning? The B50 can have a delicious cup of joe in your mug in just 45 seconds. Try that with Mr. Coffee! Roomba sucks dirt from under beds and bureaus and otherwise vacuums to near perfection virtually unattended. The Dirt Devil will be jealous indeed.

So sit back. Relax. You've got a fresh cup of coffee in your hand, and a robot cleaning your house. What could be better?

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## RESOURCES

• Whether you're a café addict or an occasional coffee drinker, the **Keurig B50 Brewer** is a fantastic product for your home. For more info and to buy direct, check out [www.keurig.com](http://www.keurig.com).

• For more information on the **Roomba robotic vac**, visit [www.iRobot.com](http://www.iRobot.com). You'll find a wealth of information about the company and their products. You can even listen to the sounds Roomba makes while "talking" to you about its current operational status.