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Single Cup Brewers: Brewing Success Cup by Cup

By Laura Everage

Specialty coffee has always been about providing customers with great tasting coffee along with the opportunity to experience some of the great flavors of coffee from around the world. Single cup brewer has helped them do just that.

Single cup brewers offer a wide variety of operators – from c-stores and hospitals, to colleges and café operators – the ability to provide customers or employees with a great tasting cup of coffee, on demand, and without added labor or coffee waste.

“Consumer interest continues to grow towards quality espresso and fine coffees, and consumers are embracing single serve espresso both at home and at their favorite restaurants and cafes,” explains Jim Frisby, VP of Nespresso Business Solutions. “We are also seeing continued exploration of new blends, flavors and recipes, and similar areas of consumer interest that can often be better met with single serve coffee solutions.”

Frisby continued, “Our products and services offer cafes the ability to make high quality espresso consistently and quickly at the touch of a button,” says Jim Frisby, VP of Nespresso Business Solutions. “It’s like having a full time barista on staff at a fraction of the cost. After one use, staff will be familiar enough to serve your customers with confidence. Once your system is in place, if any questions do arise, our customer support services are available 24/7 for all our clients’ needs.”

Nespresso’s patented capsule system, which features premium ground coffee in hermetically-sealed individual servings, seals in the quality and preserves the freshness of the blend for up to one year. Nespresso systems create a consistently high quality product with each use, ensuring there is no quality lost between the first cup and the 100th. Further, the stylish, compact design of each machine and the flattened capsules help minimize the impact on service and storage space.

In the café, the single cup brewers “allow coffee shop owners to highlight quality in the cup and focus on a single origin coffee brewed to order for their customers,” explains Desiree Logsdon, of Bunn-o-Matic. “It gives the customer the opportunity to experience their cup of coffee being created, and provides and opportunity for the barista to engage in conversations about the coffee with the customer.”

To help café owners make the most of their coffee program, Bunn recently introduced the Trifecta single cup brewer. “We developed this machine because we have always been focused on quality in the cup,” explains Logsdon. “By offering a machine that brews a single cup, it gives the shop owner the opportunity to highlight specific single origin coffees, while giving the consumer a new experience with the coffee.” As Logsdon notes, “the Trifecta allows café owners to individually price coffees, and to enjoy a greater profit margin for a coffee that is brewed cup by cup”

Single cup industry trends are headed towards efficiency, ease of use, and environmental impact. The category is looking for easy-to-use machines that have the flexibility to fit many different preferences, while providing the ability to tailor a beverage to individual tastes.

“From our experience, the greatest demand and growth possibilities for single cup point of use has been the office coffee segment,” explains Stuart Schwadron, WMF Americas. “We are finding that a lot of companies are looking to use the high-end single cup amenity as a way to keep employees in the building and provide a highly regarded benefit.” He adds. “We also see a lot of interest in the hotel world, major high end corporations looking to improve guest satisfaction with single cup solutions; both in room and within lobbies.”

To meet that demand, WMF offers two varieties of machines. The WMF 1400F is a single cup coffee solution that fresh grinds beans and brews to order, with no waste or labor. This system operates on 110 V and can accommodate two

different coffee beans as well as a chocolate product. On a smaller footprint, we offer consumer or point of use pod machines for both coffee and espresso in our international markets, such as the WMF 1.”

Consistency in the cup, cost savings (due to less waste), and variety are further helping drive popularity for the single cup brewers. When Keurig launched its single cup brewer more than a decade ago, the main focus was on the OCS segment, “where no one could get a decent cup of coffee,” says Chris Stevens, VP of Keurig’s Corporate Relations department. In that environment, great tasting coffee was hard to come by, because there was no control on the brewing of the coffee. With Keurig, we offered them a consistent cup of coffee that is brewed fresh when desired.”

The ability to brew a variety of different coffees and beverages has also helped grow demand for single cup brewers and expand the demand for the Keurig brewers. The company now offers a beverage for every occasion, including branded teas and hot chocolates, along with the varying coffees; the Keurig can also produce delicious brewed iced tea, and lattes. “It is all about different beans for different genes,” adds Stevens.

As Jason College of Newco explains, “the single cup brewer, such as The Fresh Cup, is a great way for the retailer to offer customers a wider variety of coffees than simply the coffee of the day. “With a single cup brewer such as The Fresh Cup, they now have the ability to offer customers coffee brewed cup by cup,” explains College. “It gives them the ability to highlight different coffees, by the cup, and not have to brew a full gallon and throw it away once it has passed its hold time.”

The Fresh Cup brewer from Newco always brews to perfection, allowing each cup to be specially brewed to three personal strengths: mild, medium or bold. The operator’s coffee profiles are easily programmable and provide complete control over the critical brewing parameters: pre-infusion, brew volume and water contact time.

As for those who are concerned with the environmental impact of using pods or capsules, companies such as Cafecton offer an alternative. The Petite X from Cafecton is designed to brew cup by cup using a traditional paper filter. “Because we use the paper filters, which are biodegradable, we are getting a lot of interest from those operators looking for greener single cup brewer options,” explains Nancy Houley, sales and marketing for Cafecton. “And, because the Petite X comes with three bean hoppers on top, each cup is ground to order. This way the user can have freshly ground and freshly brewed coffee on demand. The freshness of the coffee is important, and with our system, the flavor and aroma of the coffee is a great way to increase the consumer experience.” The machine, according to Houley, can also be set to brew hot chocolate, but for the operator seeking an almost unending array of options, there is the Galleria which offers three whole bean coffees of your choice, in addition to Long Espresso, Hot Chocolate, French Vanilla, Mokaccino, Cafe Vanilla, and hot water for your favorite tea. All these are available in two strengths and two-cup sizes. “In all, there is the potential for 70 different drinks with the Galleria,” adds Houley.

Convenience, quality, cost savings and variety are just a few of the advantages enjoyed when using single cup brewers. The category continues to grow in a wide variety of outlets serving coffee, bringing more connoisseurs to the industry, and more opportunities for retailers to connect with the customer. ☞

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