

TAYLORS OF HARROGATE GUATEMALA CLOUD FORESTS GROUND COFFEE £3.59 for 227g

Which? test score **81%**

This coffee had a nice stable, caramel aroma. The flavour had a good balance of fruit and acidity, with one expert picking up notes of passion fruit. All three experts described the coffee as bright and well-balanced.

which?
**BEST
BUY**

which?
**BEST
BUY**

ASDA EXTRA SPECIAL FAIRTRADE COLOMBIAN ROAST & GROUND COFFEE £2.78 for 227g

Which? test score **81%**

Our experts described the smell of this coffee as fruity and sparkling with notes of hazelnut and chocolate. They liked the light, citric aroma and raspberry flavour. It held its flavour well, even when cooled and had a good, overall balance.

ALSO TESTED

68% The Co-operative Truly Irresistible Fairtrade Colombian Roast & Ground £3.09

68% Tesco Finest Colombian Supremo Roast & Ground £2.78

68% Waitrose Brazilian Daterra Ground £2.99

66% Carte Noire £3.48 (250g)

66% Sainsbury's Taste The Difference Colombian Quinchia Community Fairtrade Ground £2.99

65% Marks & Spencer Café Connoisseur (Fairtrade) £2.59

64% Morrisons The Best Fairtrade Costa Rican £2.99

63% Café Direct Machu Picchu (Fairtrade) £3.59

60% Lavazza Qualita Oro £3.99 (250g)

60% Rombouts Brazil Sul De Minas Brazilian Ground £5.25 (250g)

59% Aldi Specially Selected Colombian Single Origin Roast & Ground £1.99 (200g)

58% Percol Fairtrade Colombia Arabica Ground £3.59

57% Starbucks House Blend Ground £3.78 (250g)

53% Twinings Rich and Velvety Fresh Ground £3.79

All are 227g packets unless otherwise stated.

EXPERT VIEW

THE PERFECT BLEND



The coffees tasted here were all blends – mostly Arabica, but with hints of Robusta in a few.

Arabica beans are almost twice as expensive as Robusta and offer a greater depth of flavour, a natural sweetness and a more intense coffee character. But, as seen in the results, even Arabica beans from the same region can differ widely in taste. This is due to location, with the best being grown on high-altitude valley slopes with rich volcanic soil. Robusta beans were only discovered 100 years ago, growing wild in Africa. They have a more 'robust', heavy style, which is useful for cheaper blends, instant coffee and adding a kick to Italian espresso.

Manufacturers and retailers tend to sell blends, as they offer consistency and stability of flavour. If you prefer a smooth but full-bodied style of coffee then choose a medium roast. For those that want an espresso style with a kick, a full/dark roast is more suitable. If you tend to have your coffee as a latte or with lots of milk then you'd be better off choosing a full or dark roast so that the flavour comes through.

Once opened, the best way to store your coffee is to keep it in the packet. Squeeze out as much air as possible, seal it with a band or clip and then put it into an air-tight container.

Don't empty the coffee grounds into a jar – exposure to air and moisture will cause the taste to deteriorate. It's not necessary – although many people think it is – to store coffee in the fridge or freezer. It's best to consume ground coffee within three months of opening.

GILES HILTON

Coffee buyer at Whittard of Chelsea
foodeditor@which.co.uk

The coffees we tasted are suitable for use in a cafetière, coffee machine or filter.

Our three industry experts blind-tasted each coffee in a specified order, in two batches. The coffee grounds were weighed and a specific amount of each sample was measured into three tasting bowls. At this point, each coffee was rated on the smell of the dry grounds.

Next, each bowl was topped with boiling water and allowed to brew for five minutes. The experts then rated each coffee on aroma, appearance, body, sweetness, overall balance and especially on flavour and aftertaste.

BEST-TASTING COFFEE

Serving a more expensive coffee after dinner doesn't guarantee the best possible taste. Our experts taste 16 premium ground coffee blends to find those with the finest flavours

The most expensive premium coffee isn't always the best tasting, a new Which? test has revealed. One of the cheapest ground coffees – Asda's Extra Special Fairtrade Colombian Roast & Ground Coffee (£2.78) – scored the same as one of the more expensive brands – Taylors of Harrogate Guatemala Cloud Forests Coffee (£3.59). Each got the top score of 81%. Our expert tasters described the Asda coffee as having a smooth

body and aftertaste and a light fruity flavour. They praised the Taylors coffee for its spicy, bright flavour and caramel aroma.

And showing that paying more really doesn't buy the best taste, Rombouts, the most expensive coffee on test at £5.25, came joint 11th with a score of 60%. Although the tasters said the smell of the roast had a nice, clean edge they all felt the flavour was bitter and that the dark roast dominated the flavour.

A NATION OF COFFEE DRINKERS

Demand for fresh coffee has soared. Between 2009 and 2010 sales grew by 6%, despite people feeling more cash-strapped. It seems many of us are moving away from expensive coffee shops and trying to recreate the experience at home. The popularity of coffee shops over the past decade has encouraged us to try alternatives to instant coffee. Last year in the UK we spent £987 million on coffee, £222

million of which was on fresh coffee (both ground and beans).

OTHER COFFEES

After the Best Buys, the next highest-scoring coffees in our test were The Co-operative Truly Irresistible Fairtrade Colombian Roast & Ground Coffee, Tesco Finest Colombian Supremo Roast & Ground Coffee and Waitrose Brazilian Daterra Ground Coffee, all scoring 68%.

One taster described The Co-operative coffee as having a pleasant, almond body. The Tesco coffee was hailed as a good all-day brew and the Waitrose coffee was complimented on its full body and nutty flavour.

The lowest-scoring coffee in our taste test was Twinings Rich and Velvety Fresh

Ground Coffee (53%) which our experts thought had an earthy smell and an old, cardboardy flavour.

Second lowest was Starbucks House Blend Ground Coffee (57%) – our experts felt that this coffee was dominated by the dark roast which tasted burnt, and one expert described the aftertaste as like 'tarmac'. None of the premium coffees we sampled was unacceptable, though.

HOW WE TEST COFFEE

We looked at widely available, premium ground coffees nominated by major supermarkets and brands as being suitable for after-dinner drinking, and which are mainly Central and South American in origin.

““ IS COFFEE ONE OF LIFE'S LUXURIES? Priced at a premium on the high street, a daily cappuccino, latte or mocha has become a way of life for many of us. But at up to £3 a time, have you started brewing your own at home to save money? Tell us about your caffeine habits at www.which.co.uk/coffee