

A Guide to Italian Coffee Culture

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Introduced in the 1500s, coffee has developed its own culture in Italy. Learn how to blend in at any Italian "bar" with our five-step guide!

The day is defined by coffee rituals: a cappuccino with breakfast, a caffè macchiato – or two – as an afternoon pick-me-up, and espresso after dinner. And like any culture, that of Italian coffee comes with seemingly mysterious laws.

Order a latte, and you'll receive a glass of milk (which is exactly what you ordered). Ask for a to-go cup or order a cappuccino after 11 a.m., and risk an instant tourist label.

Watch this video for a step-by-step explanation of Italian coffee culture from CEO of Eataly USA, Nicola Farinetti.

1. BUONGIORNO! The morning begins with a breakfast comprising a pastry paired with a delicious,



milky coffee:

Cappuccino: equal parts espresso, steamed milk, and foamed milk

Caffè latte: espresso with more steamed milk and less foam

Latte macchiato: steamed milk “marked” with a splash of espresso

To blend in: Don’t order these drinks after 11 a.m. Italians only enjoy milky coffee in the morning – never in the afternoon, and especially not after a meal!

2. PRENDIAMO UN CAFFÈ! “Let’s get a coffee!” Appropriate anytime, a caffè (or caffè normale) is simply an espresso, a small but strong shot of black coffee. Italians often sip a caffè as an afternoon pick-me-up or after a meal.

To blend in: While you can order a caffè doppio for a double shot of espresso, this is not typical in Italy. If you need that extra jolt of caffeine, just visit your favorite barista multiple times a day – you won’t be the only one.

3. MIX IT UP. Over the centuries, Italians have created a variety of alterations to the powerful punch of espresso. Branch out by ordering these at Eataly’s Lavazza.

Caffè macchiato: For the softer side of coffee, enjoy this espresso “marked” with a splash of frothy milk. Unlike the breakfast drinks, this lightly milky caffè can be enjoyed as frequently as caffè normale.

Caffè corretto: Literally translated to “corrected coffee,” this drink features espresso with a splash of alcohol, such as grappa or sambuca.

Caffè americano: After trying drip coffee in the United States, Italians decided to offer tourists a taste of home. Their interpretation: espresso diluted with plenty of hot water.

Caffè lungo: This “long coffee” comprises espresso with a splash of hot water but is stronger than the americano.

To blend in: Since the coffee experience is designed to be enjoyed socially and in small doses, to-go cups are nonexistent in Italy.

4. THINK REGIONALLY. Each of Italy’s 20 regions boasts its own unique coffee culture. Espresso may be ubiquitous, but there are many regional twists to the caffè. In the northern Le Marche, enjoy a caffè anisette for an anise-flavored espresso; in southern Sicily, try caffè d’un parrinu, an Arabic-inspired coffee flavored with cloves, cinnamon, and cocoa.

To blend in: Before ordering, research the region for local ingredients – or subtly listen to your fellow coffee drinkers at the cafe!

5. AL BANCO. In Italy, coffee is typically enjoyed al banco, or at the bar, with friends. When you visit Caffè Vergnano at Eataly, you will likely find our Italian colleagues standing al banco, chatting with a caffè in hand.

To blend in: In Italy, it is common to order and drink your coffee first, then pay at the register. Practice this method at Caffè Vergnano, which follows the same tradition.

Now that you’re an Italian caffè aficionado, create your own coffee culture with our wide selection of Italian coffee and espresso.

Buon caffè!

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