

# Cup of Comfort: Coffee and Its Uses

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## Educational Objectives

- Participants will understand the history of coffee.
- Participants will discover the many uses of coffee and the grounds.
- Participants will be introduced to the rising health benefits associated with coffee.

From that first sip of the morning to all the ways to use those grounds, coffee is a versatile, fragrant delight! An Ethiopian legend claims coffee was first discovered by a ninth-century goat herder, and its earliest uses were as a delicacy only seen at religious ceremonies. Today, coffee is one of the most traded commodities in the world and enjoyed in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes. People get their morning boost from a fresh cup and others use it to clean appliances, fertilize their gardens and upgrade their beauty routine. This lesson will cover it all – a brief history of coffee, the many ways to enjoy it as a beverage, other great uses and the ways in which it is making people healthy!



## Brewing Up History: The Epic Tale of Coffee

Coffee has many origin stories that has been shared throughout time. One favorite story begins in the Ethiopian highlands, around 850 AD when a herdsman named Kaldi's goats became more energetic and did not sleep well after eating the berries from a specific tree. When he shared the news with the head of a local monastery, the abbot was cautious, but he decided to put it to the test. He turned the berries into a drink and discovered they kept him more alert into the long evenings. These berries were soon part of their religious ceremonies to aid them in remaining awake.

As the abbot shared his news and the berries' effects began to spread, the source was officially named the coffee plant, after the province where the first plants were discovered – Kaffa. The berries were coffee cherries,

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and the pits of those cherries are known as coffee beans! While the story may be a myth, the original coffee plants definitely came from the western region of Ethiopia.

When delving into the facts, the first recorded use of coffee was only 1454 in Abyssinia (current day Ethiopia). Sheik Gemaleddin, a Muslim mufti (a legal expert permitted to make rulings on religious matters), had enjoyed coffee while visiting Abyssinia. Upon returning home to Aden, a city in Yemen, he was struck with illness. He then sent for coffee which helped him recover. Sheik Gemaleddin was a respected religious and academic man. His endorsement of coffee allowed it to become popular and spread throughout Yemen.

Soon, coffee made its way throughout to the Arabian Peninsula, and that is where the farming and trading of coffee truly took root. That is where coffee became the drink we know today!

By the 1500s, coffee was being grown throughout the Arabian Peninsula starting in Yemen and stretching through Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey. At the same time, shops, known as 'qahveh khaneh,' began to pop up in cities. These were popular spots to gather, listen to music, play chess, watch performers, catch up on the latest news and drink coffee; yes, they were the first coffee houses! In the middle of all this growth was the holy city of Mecca, which brought thousands from around the world to the area each year. Soon, others wanted to know more about coffee as it spread to Europe and beyond!

## **Mug Magic: All the ways to Drink It!**

Around the world, water is the most popular beverage, followed by tea, and coming in third is coffee. (NOTE: It is actually second in the United States!) Coffee is a beverage loved around the world, and people prepare it and flavor it in a variety of ways.

When looking at preparation, the drip coffee maker is a popular go-to! Coffee makers are convenient and consistent allowing anyone to make coffee in their home. However, there are other methods to consider depending on what you want. The French Press has become a popular choice if you want a richer coffee flavor. This utilizes a more coarsely ground coffee being seeped in boiling water before being isolated into the bottom of the container from the beverage. Similarly, the pour-over provides the brewer more control of their flavor as they pour their hot water manually over filtered grounds! For those who appreciate their coffee on the cooler side, cold brew involves soaking coffee grounds for 16 to 24 hours. This cool, concentrated beverage can then be diluted with additional water over ice. Finally, espresso is another well-known concentrated prep option. This process involves hot water, high pressure and only 20 to 30 seconds to brew.

The versatility of coffee goes a step further when one goes to looking at the ways those preparations can be used within various drinks. Espresso is often mixed with steamed milk and milk foam to make a variety of drinks like cappuccinos, lattes and macchiatos. When one begins to add the many flavor and milk options, the opportunities with coffee really become endless.

## **Grounds for Adventure: Fun and Unexpected Uses for Coffee**

While drinking it has arguably always been the most popular way to use coffee, over the years people have discovered many unique ways to use the grounds. Grounds have been used for various gardening, beauty, cooking and cleaning efforts due to their texture, taste and nutrients. Here is a look at some of the most popular ways to use coffee grounds after enjoying your morning cups:

**In the Garden** – Coffee grounds can be used in multiple ways within the garden. First, they contain a variety of key minerals that plants need to grow, like calcium, iron, magnesium,



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nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium; plus, they add organic matter to improve soil texture and drainage while provide food for good microorganisms. These essential nutrients are often quickly depleted from the soil within a garden, so coffee grounds make a fabulous soil amendment. They also attract worms that are great for one's garden. This is not a use that takes a large amount of effort, as all one must do is sprinkle the coffee grounds onto the soil around the plants in a thin layer up to ½ inch deep. You can work them into the soil or mulch right over the top of them. Research shows that the bacteria and fungi found on decomposing coffee grounds may prevent pathogenic fungi that will damage or kill plants from getting established in the soil. If you do not have an immediate use for them in the garden, coffee grounds are a great addition to any composting for later use.

**In Your Beauty Routine** – The coarse texture of coffee makes it a powerful exfoliate. Exfoliating is important for one's skin because it removes dead skin cells and dirt improving the texture, brightening the complexion and clearing clogged pores. Coffee grounds mixed with a bit of water or coconut oil makes a perfect exfoliating scrub that can be used directly on one's face or body. The caffeine in coffee is also known to be an antioxidant with photoprotective properties. Basically, research suggests that caffeine could protect the skin from sun damage, and this means it is also anti-aging. While the research is there, don't use this as an argument to kick the sunblock just yet! Finally, when looking at facial beauty, there are claims that coffee bean extract is successful in treating under-eye circles, puffiness and discoloration (including several patent-pending commercial beauty products).

Coffee has also been shown to have positive effects when used within one's hair routine. Specifically, it helps exfoliate the scalp, suppressing dandruff and the caffeine stimulates hair growth. Using this as part of a scrub before a shower a couple of times a week could have noticeable personal beauty benefits. With anything new you may be considering using in

your routine, contact your health provider before making major changes.

**When You Are Cleaning** – If you are not a fan of the chemicals in cleaners, coffee grounds are a great abrasive alternative for removing build-up on a sink, cookware, or grill. While they shouldn't be used on porous materials because they will stain, they are a quality option with appropriate hard-to-clean surfaces. They are also a great way to repair wooden furniture that may have been scratched. A paste of grounds and water can buff out scratches and when left to set, it will dye the exposed wood disguising the marks. When using on any surface, be sure to test a small area first to ensure it will not leave an unwelcome stain on surfaces or color on wood. In addition to cleaning, coffee grounds can also eliminate and neutralize odors whether placed in a bowl in the fridge or a pantyhose in a car or shoe!

**When Preparing Dinner** – Finally, we cannot ignore the obvious use of coffee for flavoring! While there are people trying new things all the time, coffee grounds have been popular for tenderizing meat as the acids and enzymes help break down the tough meat muscles. Instant coffee can also add great flavor and a great crust when placed on meat while cooking or used in marinades. However, exploring recipes before trying is important, as different meats and cuts may call for different coffee roasts! \*

## The Coffee Cure: Unlocking the Healing Power

While there was a time when many warned against the potential consequences of caffeine consumption, more recent research shows the opposite as there are many potential benefits of coffee in moderation. The stimulant in coffee has often had people emphasizing the increased energy and cognitive function, but now Harvard-based research also links drinking coffee to lowered risks of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, some cancers (liver and endometrial), Parkinson's disease and depression.



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Coffee is arguably good for one's health. Again, coffee is more complex than just caffeine, it includes antioxidants and bioactive compounds. However, the best part may be that reasonable consumption is between two and five cups a day! With that exciting news in mind, it is important to remember that research is ever-changing; while there is research now expressing the health benefits of coffee, research could say something different five years from now.

## Cheers to Coffee

Today, 75% of Americans drink coffee; this means three-out-of-four adults are coffee drinkers. And 49% of them drink it daily. Coffee is part of most people's everyday life. The more one knows about the delicious treat, the more opportunities they have to embrace the beverage and its many other quality uses. Cheers!

## Let's Chat! Questions and Activities to Consider

- What is your favorite way to drink coffee?
- How have you used the grounds of coffee?
- What new coffee preparation or coffee ground use are you going to try after finishing this lesson?
- Consider hosting a 'Coffee House' for a club meeting. Serve coffee and treats (maybe snack cakes cut into petit four) and provide members a chance to share their talents whether it is

singing, an instrument or reading a poem!  
Have fun with it!

## Resources

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