



3 Easy Ways to Ensure Your Coffee Doesn't Taste Foul

So often we hear our customers complaining: 'Our coffee doesn't taste nice! It is bitter, rancid, rubbery or medicinal. Is my machine running too hot? Why can't I get the same clean, round and enjoyable flavour I used to get before?' Our answer is always: 'When was the last time you've backflushed your group head?'



More often than none, the romantic notion of brewing an extraordinary espresso at home like the barista around the corner takes over other less fun aspects of coffee making at home. The truth is that this isn't a maintenance free hobby. Traditional espresso machines need a bit of TLC to keep pouring out the good stuff and I never cease to be amazed at how much of an improvement a little scrubbing with a brush can give you. Far too many people neglect cleaning their machines, but if you want the absolute best espresso you can get, you need to take care of your gear.

Today we will focus on *three simple and easy steps* to make sure your machine is taken care of. We will be talking predominantly about the e61 group head technology (one of the more common prosumer group heads), but most of this guide is applicable for all commercially oriented semi-auto domestic machines with a pressure release valve. If you're not sure if this guide applies to your machine, please contact us to find out more.

The three most important factors affecting the quality of your coffee (apart from the grinder you use, the coffee beans in your grinder hopper and your coffee making skills) are:

- External maintenance of the group head, portafilters, baskets, shower screen, steam arm and milk jugs.
- Internal maintenance of the boiler, coffee pipes and other parts susceptible to wear & tear.
- The quality of the water entering the machine.

External Maintenance

Any machine with a release pressure valve will direct all the built up pressure into the drip tray, which will result in a fast increase of what we call "coffee gunk" in and around the grouphead and dispersion screen. After a few weeks, it can get pretty nasty, even if you backflush regularly. You will need to clean and maintain the grouphead and dispersion screen not to end up with the coffee gunk in your cup.

You Will Need

- 2x Microfibre cloths
- Coffee Tool
- Milk Steamer Solution
- Blind Filter
- Clean Machine Cleaning Powder

Daily Maintenance

1. Clean the steam wand: wrap a damp cloth around the steam arm to soften any milk residue. Once softened, clean the residue off. Turn on the steam to ensure the steam nozzle holes are clear; if not, clean them out with the **Coffee Tool** poking bit. If there is a particularly stubborn build up of milk scale on the steam wand, use **Milk Steamer Solution** to dissolve the build up and gently wipe away with a damp cloth.
2. Clean the handle: remove the handles, empty the grounds, flush hot water through the filters and wipe with a clean cloth
3. Backflush the group head with water: remove the filter basket from the handle, insert the blind filter, lock the handle with the blind filter in place, press the coffee button (or pull the lever handle up) and let it run for five seconds. Repeat the above process for a total of five times.
4. Clean the milk jug(s): ensure that all milk jugs are thoroughly cleaned. The best way to maintain milk jugs is to clean them as soon as possible after use. If there is a build up of milk scale on the inside of the jug, soak with 20mL of **Milk Steamer Solution** and hot water for one hour, then rinse and gently wipe out
5. Clean the surface: remove the drip tray, empty it, rinse and dry with a clean cloth. Replace the filter basket in the handle. Wipe all surfaces with a clean damp cloth and then with a dry cloth.

Weekly Maintenance

1. Use the Coffee Tool brush to scrub out the coffee residue from the inside of the group head.
2. **Whilst the machine is switched off** and group head is cool, using a damp cloth gently wipe the shower screen inside of the group head.

Monthly Maintenance

1. Repeat steps 1-2 from Daily Maintenance

2. Place a quarter of a teaspoon of backflush powder into the blind filter and dissolve it with a little bit of hot water.
3. Press the coffee button (or pull the lever up) as if you were trying to extract an espresso and let it run for five seconds. Press button/pull lever down and let suds soak for five seconds. Repeat five times.
4. Remove blind filter from the handle, soak all your handles and baskets in a container with hot water and backflush powder for at least one hour to clean the coffee oils away. (One teaspoon to 500ml of water approximately - ensuring the filters, baskets and metal handle surfaces are covered).
5. Replace the blind filter in the handle repeat step 3 with clean water to flush detergent residue from the machine.
6. Before making your next coffee for yourself, use the machine to make an espresso shot that you will not consume. This is to help season the group head (and an opportunity to adjust the grinder so that your extraction is optimal)

Quarterly Maintenance

1. Remove the shower screen of your group head (for traditional groupheads, unscrew the screw that holds in the shower screen. For E61 groupheads, using a flathead screwdriver gently lever the shower screen out).
2. Soak your shower screen in a solution of hot water and a quarter teaspoon of cleaning powder to remove all the residual build up of oil on the inner section of the screen. Soak for at least one hour.
3. While the shower screen is soaking, use your Coffee Tool brush to scrub deeper inside the group head.
4. Reassemble the shower screen into your group head.

Internal Maintenance

It is important to keep a regular regime of general service to your machine. We recommend general service **every 18 months**, more frequent if you are a heavy entertainer or do not use filtered water at home. If you haven't purchased it from Di Bartoli or you live outside Sydney, contact us to find out where is your nearest certified technician.

While in service, your machine will undergo a thorough check to ensure that it is cleaned, descaled, any worn out parts replaced and tested for pressure and temperature stability. **Click here to find out more about our services.** In certain cases where the customer lives in a remote area far away from any technician, or if they are unable to transport the machine to the workshop, we will provide you with a DIY kit and some guidance on how to perform a light servicing yourself at home. **Contact us for DIY service advice.**

Use Filtered Water

Limescale is the biggest enemy of all coffee machines. Frequently seen in large quantities in our service centre with machines having normal tap water used with it. 95% of all machines breakdowns can be attributed to scale build up as it coats every internal surface in the boiler, piping, solenoids, pump, group head, as well as the heating element (reducing its ability to heat), lever shafts and gauges.

Using water straight from the tap shortens the life expectancy of your machine, requiring more frequent servicing and dramatically increasing your repair bill thoroughly the machine's life. Not to mention significantly impacting the taste of your coffee. Tap water hardness varies in Australia, between the city, countryside and even in difference suburbs of the same town. Di Bartoli recommend using **Water Hardness Strips** to test the hardness of your tap water and to help you choose the correct filtration solution for yourself.

Widely available water filtration solutions such as filtration jugs will only remove a small percentage of the scale present and therefore are only partially effective. The best solution is to use a system that has 5 micron filtration; the **Aqua Pro** has been designed specifically not only to deliver soft water for all domestic electrical appliances that use water but also deliver clean and tasty water for all cooking and drinking purposes. Remember to change to a fresh filter cartridge **every 12 months**.

If your machine is plumbed-in to a main water source, there are a range of water filtration solutions for you. **Browse online** or call for the best solution for you and your machine.

Provided that you continuously use filtered water, descaling isn't required often with a prosumer level machine between general machine services as we will descale as part of the service. However, if your machine has an aluminum boiler (like the Gaggia Classic) you will need to descale it every few months or follow up the manufacture instruction for frequency if your machine is a fully automatic.