



Choosing the Right Espresso Grinder for you

As with **choosing an espresso machine**, choosing the right espresso grinder will come down to your individual preferences. At Di Bartoli we ensure that every grinder we sell grinds finely enough and consistently enough for espresso. However, there are variations in build quality, type and size of grinding burrs, power of motor, speed, noise level, etc.

There are also variations in the mechanism used to adjust grind particles size: a 'stepless' grinder allows infinitely fine adjustments and is ideal for those who like to have complete control over every aspect of the extraction process, while a 'stepped' mechanism allows you to choose from fixed increments in grind size, and is usually easier and faster to adjust, particularly for those who alternate between grinding for espresso and plunger or filter coffee.

You should also consider whether you prefer a 'doserless' dispensing mechanism, which grinds the coffee directly into the basket and allows you to visually evaluate the exact volume of your dose, or a 'dosed' mechanism, which dispenses into a segmented dosing chamber and then transfers a fixed dose into the basket via a lever mechanism. Many people prefer the doserless grinder's simple one-step process, while a dosered grinder offers the benefit of easily dispensing the same dose for multiple coffees, and can also aid in breaking up clumps.

Obviously, your budget will also be an important factor in your decision. It is possible to find an espresso grinder under \$600. Nevertheless, bear in mind that many people buying in this price range later end up upgrading to a more commercially oriented grinder as their coffee-making skills and appreciation develop, or the amount of coffee they make increases. In considering your budget you should also consider the type of machine you have, as the grinder you use will limit the results you can achieve.

In our experience, new home baristas commonly underestimate the importance of the grinder. Generally speaking, to achieve the best result in the cup your machine and grinder should be evenly matched – if you've invested in a heat exchange or double boiler machine, you'll want to make sure you choose an equally capable grinder.

Why do I need a burr grinder for espresso?

Espresso extraction uses pressure to force water through ground coffee. If the size of the particles is inconsistent, water will find the path of least resistance, creating 'channels', and is not able to evenly extract the full range of soluble particles which carry the flavour. This results in inferior coffee, with either a bitter or watery flavour. With a consistent and precise grind, on the other hand, the resistance is equal throughout the 'puck' (the disc of ground coffee in the basket). This results in a more even flow of water across the puck and a more even extraction from each particle, allowing for a superior cup with balanced flavour and thick crema.

A burr grinder has a true grinding or squashing action which quickly produces the precise and consistent distribution of particle sizes required for even espresso extraction. Flat burrs have powerful motors, and tend to grind very finely, while conical burrs have a shape which gives excellent heat distribution.

A blade grinder does not really grind, but slashes the beans into smaller and smaller particles, somewhat like a food processor. This results in an uneven mix of fine powder and large chunks, making good espresso extraction impossible. Another problem with blade grinders is that they generate a lot of heat which tends to burn the grinds, leaving a burnt, metallic taste. For this reason, we do not stock blade grinders at Di Bartoli.

Price Level \$300-\$600

A grinder under \$600 is normally best suited to a low coffee volume scenario (2-3 cups per day) and is likely to involve a degree of compromise, whether on longevity, ability to cope with high volume of beans, grind precision, speed or noise. To help you make the best choice within this category, we would normally require a good understanding of your domestic scenario to help establish your priorities: what is crucially important, and where you are happy to compromise?

Doserless: on a more general note, if precision of grind size is your top priority (being mainly an espresso drinker) you should consider [Ascaso I-mini](#). This grinder has a micrometric worm drive that allows very small increments in grind size, giving you the potential to work out more accurately that espresso variable to improve the overall flavour in your cup.

Overall, the **Ascaso I-mini** represents great value for money in this price point - not only for its precision, but also for its small footprint (ideal for limited bench space), its stability, and its sleek look, which complements any stainless steel machine.

This grinder will not be ideal, however, if you need to alter your grind size frequently (such as alternating between espresso and plunger, stove top, percolator or Decaf / Turkish coffees). Since grind adjustment involves turning the worm gear back and forth to achieve a coarser or finer grind, and there are no visible indicators to guide your settings, achieving an accurate grind size is likely to be time-consuming and involve significant wastage of beans.

If your priority is ease of use, you may wish to consider the [Rancilio Rocky](#) or the [Isomac Granmacinino](#), as both grinders feature a stepped mechanism allowing an easy and quick adjustment between different particles grind sizes. **The Rancilio Rocky** has a better motor than the Isomac **Granmacinino**, and is more robust, with 58mm flat burrs (vs 38mm conical blades in the Isomac). However, some people prefer the **Isomac's** attractive stainless steel body and chute and its small footprint.

Doser: If your priority is a doser grinder, we suggest you look at the \$600+ grinders. The majority of these feature a good quality doser mechanism which not only minimizes clumping, but also sweeps clean the chambers and allows good dose adjustment (6-9g per chamber). Under the \$600, you will find models like [Rancilio Rocky Doser](#), feels sturdier in the hand, though don't offer dose adjustment and in comparison with the fully commercial grinders, has a lower sweeping rate.

Another good grinder under the \$600 mark is the [Compak K3](#) grinder that features a commercial 58mm blades and a fairly good motor. It is also micrometric, so potentially may assist in getting good precision over the grind when making espresso. In reality, we found some compromise with built quality and the adjustment color to be relatively stiff and not optimizing adjustment. The Touch model has a built in timer located at the base of the grinder. Again, we found it inaccurate as well as limited.

Price Level: \$600-\$1,000

Doserless: If your priority is a grind-on-demand, easy to adjust, elegant and a small foot grinder, you can look at those two stepped models: the [ECA KS](#) and the [Mahlkonig Vario](#). Both of these grinders are reliable, robust, easy to clean and very easy to adjust between extreme settings. The **ECA KS** has smaller increments than the Rancilio Rocky, allowing a higher precision, and is a great match with any retro-look, stainless steel machine with its stylish chrome/black body. The **Mahlkonig Vario** is a unique, relatively new German grinder, presenting a combination of beneficial features for the home connoisseur: durable ceramic blades that keep the coffee cool and prevents bitterness generate less heat than metal which reduces bitterness. It also has a micro / macro adjustment dials that provides high precision from one end and a quick drastic settings change from the other end, if you use your plunger or stove top maker.

Doser: At the lower-mid range of the fully commercial grinders, you will find the [Compak K3 Elite](#) with full commercial 58mm Flat burrs blades, Micrometric Adjustment (Stepless) and doser chamber adjustment (6-9g). A slightly more elegant option is the [ECA Best Grinder in Silver or in Chrome](#). This is a powerful stepped home grinder with 54mm flat burr blades and a powerful motor (300 Watt) that ensures minimal overheating with a large volume grind. It is solidly built, quiet to use and easy to work with. You will find smooth lever handle operation, little static for even ground distribution and little mess on the bench. Dose is adjustable (5-10g).

At the higher range of the fully commercial oriented grinders, you will find popular doser models like [Macap M4 Chrome](#) or a [Mazzer Mini](#). These grinders offer precision grinding which allow you to achieve the best possible flavour. They are fast, and able to cater for any possible entertainment scenario without overheating. One of the most popular models for the home connoisseurs nowadays, is the [Mazzer Mini Elektronika](#). Like the Mini, it features 58mm blades and micrometric adjustment, but it also has an easy to use digital display you can adjust your dose with by time. The chute at the front does a great job in breaking clumps and generating static free, centered ground pour straight onto the basket with minimum waste, mess and clumps.

What next?

At Di Bartoli, our philosophy is that a good coffee grinder is in many ways a more important decision than your machine. Choosing the right grinder will greatly enhance the pleasure you get from coffee making as well as the quality you achieve in the cup. For this reason, it's worth really taking your time to consider what you are looking for in a grinder and what will work best for you, both now and in the longer term. We hope this information will help you to figure out your priorities and narrow down some of the grinders you may be interested in. You may also like to browse and compare features in more detail on our website, <http://dibartoli.com.au/all-grinders/>

Finally, we would encourage you not to buy a grinder until you have experienced how it actually looks, sounds and feels to use. At Di Bartoli you can try out all of these grinders in-store and discuss any questions you may have with our specialist staff, or call us on 02 9389 9892.