

CONSUMER REPORT GUIDE:

7 Questions You Need To Ask Before Buying a Commercial Espresso Machine

Find the espresso machine that works the way your business works and maximize the profitability of your coffee program.

espresso soci



Dear Friend,

Finding and choosing the right espresso machine can be an overwhelming and frustrating experience.

Why?

Because we're inundated with so many marketing messages (up to 10,000 a day, according to Forbes.com) that you're bound to feel overwhelmed and even misled when it comes to finding someone you can trust.

With unclear information, inaccurate information, lousy service after the sale, and far too many salespeople saying *"well my machine's just as good as X but I'm \$500 less"* all too common, making a wise decision is more important than ever.

This is Jon Shalen, and here at **Espresso Soci**, we ensure you **always serve great coffee even if you don't have trained baristas**.

And I want to take away any fears, frustration, or confusion as you go through this process. That's why I created this Consumer Report Guide, "7 Questions You Need to Ask Before Buying a Commercial Espresso Machine". Inside you will discover exactly which questions to ask so you can make an informed decision about choosing the right espresso machine for you and your business.

It's been designed in a simple, easy-to-understand way that will lead you to the right espresso machine, ensuring you serve the great espresso-based drink that your customers want and deserve. Even if you don't have trained baristas.

Okay, let's get started!

Why Should You Listen To Me?

My name is Jon Shalen, and I have been in the coffee business for almost 30 years. But my fascination with coffee started over 50 years ago, when I was 8 or 9 and swore in front of my mother for the very first time. It's a long story, but it ended with my crying out through burnt lips, "How can you drink this sh*t?"



So how did I go from that first horrible coffee experience to being the largest direct importer of Faema espresso machines in the US? I sold my first espresso machine in 1997. I was running the national accounts department at *illy* caffè, and one of my customers was Morton's Steak House. They needed a new espresso machine, and we had what I now know was a second-tier brand, so I sold it to them. They didn't ask a lot of questions and I didn't have a lot of answers.

But I had a bunch of questions for the team at Morton's. Which I must admit they thought was a little weird. They thought they should be asking *me* questions. And most every question they asked, I answered with something like, "**How should I know? I don't work at Morton's.**"

That's when the lightbulb went off for me. People didn't know *what questions to ask* to make an informed decision about the right espresso machine for them to buy for their restaurant/hotel/café/cruise ship/etc. And why would they? They're running their business. They're not espresso machine experts.

Since leaving *illy* caffè, I've spent the past 20+ years in and around coffee equipment. I spent a few years at Cimballi USA running their national accounts department and a few years at FETCO as their Director of Sales.

Fast forward to 2010, when I left corporate America and started **Espresso Soci**, where we quickly became the largest direct importers of Faema espresso machines.

Now I spend my days drinking great coffee and helping people figure out what's the right espresso machine for their business.

I've taken my almost 30 years of experience helping people find the right espresso machine and condensed it down into 7 key questions you need to ask to ensure you make the right decision for your business.

But what you'll learn as you go through this is that each of these questions can and should lead you to other questions. The good news is that as you ask these questions, and more importantly as you get answers to these questions, the right espresso machine for your business will then be a simple and well-researched choice.

Okay, now that you know a little about me, let's get into the 7 questions you need to ask before buying a commercial espresso machine.

Question #1: How do I want to make and serve coffee?

Every business operates on systems. It's the way things get done. And you need to have an espresso machine that fits within your systems. Putting in the time up front will ultimately give you a coffee program that has the 3 key elements to your success:

Simplicity • Consistency • Control

“How do you want to make and serve coffee?” may seem like a really simple question, but it's actually a very complicated question to answer. Tied up in this question is everything about how your business does or will operate.

For example:

Will customers order their drinks at a table or do they walk up to the counter?

If at the table:

- How does the drink order get put into your POS system?
- Where is the espresso machine?
- Who makes the drink?
- Who brings it to the table?
- What sugar do I serve with the drink?
- Should I serve a lemon rind with the drink?

(This one I'll answer for you: **HELL NO!** During and after World War II when good coffee was nearly impossible to get, in Italy, to cut through the bitter taste of the bad coffee, cafés would give you a lemon rind to rub on the rim of your cup. So today, if you serve a lemon rind with your espresso, you're saying to the world that you serve a lousy coffee. So please, no lemon rinds with your espresso.)

If at the counter:

- Who makes the drink?
- Where do you keep the cups, syrups, napkins, etc.?
- Most importantly, how do you take the customer's order, put it in your POS system, take their money, and move them out of the way so that you can talk to the next customer?
- And somewhere in there you need to make their drink, grab the pastry they ordered, put it in a bag, hand it to them, thank them for their business and tell them to have a wonderful day.

And this is just scratching the surface of the question of how you want to make and serve coffee. Will you use paper or ceramic cups? Or both? How many blends of coffee will you serve? Will you offer decaf? Will your machine be in the front of the house or the back? (We'll talk more about this one in a moment.)

So before spending money to buy what could be a \$20,000 boat anchor, you'll need to take a detailed look at how your business operates and get a machine that works the way your business works. Not the other way around.

“When I was building my new house, I wanted to have a great espresso machine. Jon helped me find the perfect machine for me: a Faema E61 Legend. I love this machine.”

—BEN C., CHICAGO, IL

Question #2: Where is the espresso machine going to be?

Specifically: Will the machine be in the front of the house where the customer can see it, or in the back of the house?

If it's going to be in the **front of the house**, then you'll want to get something more attractive. Something that compliments the décor of your business.

You should also consider, will the customer see the front of the machine or the back of the machine? If the customer will see the front of the machine, then style becomes even more important. If the customer will only see the back of the machine, that gives you more flexibility. Most machines have a clean stainless steel back panel which lends itself to almost any operation.

If the machine will be in the **back of the house**, then don't pay for pretty. The only people that will see it are your staff. Get a work horse, not a show horse.

“I love working with Jon & Linda. They are always asking what I need and how they can help. I don't think we could have rolled out an espresso program to all of our stores without their help.”

—BILLIE W., QUICK CHEK

Question #3: Do I have the right mechanicals in place where I want to put the machine?

This is a simple one to figure out, but if you don't get these answers before you buy your machine, it could be very costly to fix later.

With most commercial machines, you're going to need the following:

- **220V single phase power with a dedicated 30 amp breaker**

FYI, most machines come with a cord but not a plug.

Assuming you have a 30 amp breaker, have your electrician install a NEMA L6-30 wall socket and supply you with the corresponding plug.

- **A 3/8" cold water line with a shut off**

This is a good time to mention that most espresso machines come with a **metric water connection**. This can frustrate your plumber to no end. So be sure to ask your equipment supplier what type of water connection their machine comes with. If it's metric, make sure that they have the proper metric-to-standard adapters to make the installation go smoothly.

- **A 2-inch open air gap floor drain**

While this has become code in most parts of the US, be sure to check (or have your GC check) with the local building department to make sure before you buy the machine. Breaking up a concrete floor to put in a drain is never fun and always expensive.

There are two more things to consider with your mechanicals.

- You'll want all of the above to be **within 3 feet from the back of the machine**. This ensures that the cables, water lines, and drain lines that come with the machine will reach and make the installation easier.
- You **MUST** have **proper water treatment** for the machine. It is the cheapest insurance policy you can ever have.

For an espresso machine, proper water treatment is a **water softener**. There are a lot of tiny orifices in your machine that will quickly clog with scale if you don't have water softening.

However, don't put a water softener on your drip coffee equipment. For drip coffee, you want a **water filter**. Softened water will change the way the ground coffee interacts with the water in the brew basket and can dramatically impact the flavor of your coffee. So, remember, **softening for espresso equipment, filtration for drip equipment**.

“I could not keep my café open without Jon. We're in a remote tourist destination. Sometimes I can't get a service guy out as quick as I need, but Jon is always on the other end of the phone walking me through how to fix my machine.”

—BETH M., PIGEON FORGE, TN

Question #4: How much training am I willing and able to give my staff?

Here's the thing: You're busy. You can only dedicate so much time to staff training. And you may not be an expert when it comes to making coffee.

This is where you need to lean on technology.

This is where you can say, “I want to give my customers the perception of a hand-crafted drink that may not be completely hand crafted.”

For example, if you plan on using a traditional espresso machine, there are three great technologies you can take advantage of.

1. Get an on-demand grinder.

FYI, grinders are “stupid”. They do exactly what you tell them to do, so unless you’re going to be a super high volume coffee shop, don’t buy a large grinder. An on-demand grinder will give you a consistent shot dose for your coffee with no waste.

Take a look at the Casadio Enea On-Demand. It is a work horse that is easy to operate and will run for 15–20 years. Check it out on our website:

espressosoci.com/enea-on-demand

2. Get a machine with an auto frother.

This may be the single best decision you can make to ensure that you serve a great drink. There are many of these on the market, but they are not all the same. They all come with a temperature probe that measures the temperature of the milk and will shut off at the pre-determined temperature. But you still need to manually regulate the air/steam ratio to get the proper texture of the milk.

You’ll want to get a unit that has an actual air compressor inside the unit. The air compressor is a great, set-it-and-forget-it tool. Once you determine what you feel is the “perfect” texture for your milk, the machine will give that to you every time.

The company that created this technology and still holds the patent on it is Cimbali. These steam arms are available on both their Cimbali and Faema brands of machines. If you would like to see just how easy an auto frother is to use, check out these two 90-second videos on our YouTube channel:

youtu.be/ZQWFJshF-Ss & youtu.be/G2JlvD7Eavc

3. Get a pressure tamper.

Consistently tamping coffee is really hard. Add to it that you’re supposed to adjust the grinder to the person making the coffee. But if you have multiple people making the coffee, what do you do? How do you set up the grinder so that every person on your staff makes a great coffee?

You can’t.

The solution is a **pressure or spring-loaded tamper**. This device helps ensure that everyone tamps with the same pressure: you can take away the inconsistency and adjust your grinder to the tamper, not the person. This way, no matter who is making the coffee, you know it’s going to be good.

And if right about now you’re saying, *well, I’m buying a super automatic, so I don’t have to worry about any of this stuff*, that’s great. Except that with any super auto-

matic you will need to do (at minimum) a once-a-day adjustment of the grinders. You'll want to do this to guarantee that you are always serving a great coffee.

There are some super automatic machines that have self-adjusting grinders. And who knows, they may turn out to be everything the manufacturer says they are, but as I'm writing this in early 2022, I'm not sold just yet.

So, when you are looking at a super automatic, be sure to ask the company, "How do I adjust the grinders and is there a simple way for the machine to tell me that the coffee is correct?"

“The espresso machines we were using just weren't doing the job for us. I was apprehensive to switch, but Jon walked me through the process. And then when he offered a 30-day money back guarantee, I knew I had found my guy.” —JOE F., PANERA BREAD COMPANY

Question #5: Should I consider buying a used machine?

The short answer is **no**. You should never buy a used machine. But I don't know your finances and how much money you have to invest. What I do know is that the true cost of owning a used machine vs. a new machine is pretty severe.

The used machine will always, in the long run, cost you more. And it will cost you more for a bunch of reasons, but some of the key ones are things you can never know:

- The history of the machine?
- What work has been done on it?
- Did the tech use parts from the manufacturer or after-market parts?
- Did it have proper water treatment and was it properly maintained?

“My machine died in late September and we didn't have money in the budget for a new one. Jon got creative and got us a new machine so we could continue to serve coffee, and he offered to not invoice us until the first of the year. This allowed us to keep selling coffee, make money, keep our guests happy and not have to fight with the bean counters at corporate.” —BRETT M., ATLANTIC CITY, NJ

Question #6: What level of support can I expect to get from my coffee supplier?

This is important for you to know, because if your coffee guy won't give you a certain level of support, then what they're saying is *“We don't care how our coffee*

tastes in your business.” And if they don’t care how their coffee tastes, then you need to find a new coffee supplier.

As a simple rule, if your coffee supplier will not commit to doing quarterly trainings with your team, then move on.

We’re all busy. And hopefully your coffee guy has lots of customers. But if they can’t or won’t commit to helping you make their coffee taste great, then they are not the right partner.

Speaking of support, regardless of what machine you buy, it is the responsibility of the coffee supplier to **calibrate** that machine so that the coffee tastes the way that it should. Once they set it up, they need to train you and your staff how to keep it operating and calibrated properly.

The level of support you get from your coffee guy will factor into the level of technology you will need in your machine. Simply put, the less support, the greater the need for technology.

“What I love about Jon is that he’s always there to support our hotels. He finds and fixes problems before I even know I have a problem.”

—TODD C., MARGARITAVILLE

Question #7: What’s the best espresso machine for me to buy?

OK, so you’ve asked all of these questions. You probably noticed that these questions lead to many more questions. Perfect! That’s what they are designed to do. And now you’re ready to buy an espresso machine and you’re asking which is the “best” machine to buy.

For me that’s an easy question. But I am biased. I only sell Faema, Cimbali and Casadio. They are all part of the Cimbali family, which means many of the parts are interchangeable. And with the range of machines from the 3 brands, we can take care of any needs a customer has.

Also, I am the laziest SOB you’ll ever meet. I don’t want a call from you on a Saturday night telling me that your machine is down. And Faema, Cimbali and Casadio just break down less. And when they break down (and they will break down), they are easier to fix.

But I didn’t write this to talk about me, I wrote it to help you find the right espresso machine.

So, despite my obvious bias... the best machine for you to buy is...

The machine that has a factory trained technician that stocks parts within 30-45 minutes of your building.

By now you've realized that buying the right espresso machine is the culmination of a lot of questions and a lot of answers. But you also have to have a bit of a crystal ball to see into the future. And that future involves your machine going down. And when it does, you need to get it up and running as quickly as possible. That's where the properly trained service provider comes in. You'll want to get a list from the manufacturer of all of the factory trained technicians in your area. You'll also want to make sure that they stock the most common parts that can fail on your machine.

I've sold a lot of machines because our competitors had to wait for parts to come from Italy, Spain or China before they could fix a machine. And God bless them for dropping the ball so often that I could then sell their customers a new machine. A machine that we could support with local service and parts. So, if our service network doesn't have the part they need, **we do**. And we will overnight any part to them so that tomorrow, your espresso machine is up, running and making you money.

“I was going to buy a 3 group, drop dead gorgeous traditional machine. But after talking to Jon, I realized I needed a 2-group work horse that my customers would never see. He saved me a lot of money.”

—DEREK V., FORT WAYNE, IN

Bonus Question #8: So what do I do next?

If you're looking for the best espresso machine that works the way your business works and will generate the greatest profit for you, I've put together a very special no-cost, no-obligation, very limited-time offer just for you.

100% Free Consultation

I have set aside space in my calendar to personally meet with you to give you a FREE consultation. Together, we'll develop a customized plan to help you find the right espresso machine for you and your business.

During our time together, you will discover:

- The technology that you'll need on your machine and how that will increase your profitability.
- The insight you'll need to find the right coffee supplier, and how that will drive guest satisfaction and keep them coming back for more of your awesome coffee.
- How to leverage both your machine and your coffee to beat your competition and become not necessarily the “best” coffee in town, but to become everyone's favorite coffee in town.

30-Day Money Back Guarantee

I'm so confident that you'll find the time we spend together to be so valuable that I'm going to give you...

My 100% Risk-Free Money Back Guarantee

Although my consultation is free, I know your time is valuable. I also understand you might be wondering if my offer is as valuable as I say it is.

So I'm putting my money where my mouth is.

If after our time together, you decide to buy a new espresso machine from me, I will give you a 30-day money back guarantee. You read that right. If after speaking with me you purchase a commercial espresso machine from me, have it installed, and within 30 days you determine it's not the right machine for your business, **I will take it back** and give you a full refund. No questions asked. — Well, that's not completely true. I will want to know where I went wrong. This will make me better at my job and help me get it right for the next person.

All you need to do is keep the original packaging that the machine came in so that it can be safely transported back to our warehouse.

Imagine if you could wave a magic wand and actually be serving great coffee to your guests and doing it profitably with a happy staff.

I can help you make that happen.

The first step is to call my office at 219-922-7504 and ask for Stacy. Tell her that you want to take me up on my 30-day money back guarantee. She'll schedule a time for us to talk about finding the right espresso machine for your business. And before you know it, you'll be on your way to being the favorite place in town for coffee.

Sincerely,



Jon Shalen
President

P.S. I understand if you're a bit skeptical. Many of my happy clients felt the same way before they met with me, but here is what they found:

“I knew that I wanted to have an espresso program but didn't know where to start. Jon took his time to explain all my options and asked lots of great questions that forced me to involve other people on the team, so that together we developed what is now a really successful coffee program.”

—SARA R. PROVIDENCE, RI

Ensuring you always drink great coffee

We've been in the coffee business for almost 30 years and we believe that **Coffee is the Most Important Meal of the Day.** Everything we sell is our favorite. Everything we do is to ensure that you're always getting a great cup of coffee or tea.

If you have any questions about any of our products or just a question about how to brew a phenomenal cup of coffee, please email me at jon@espressosoci.com. I'd love to hear from you.

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www.espressosoci.com