

Cafecito

by William Alexander

as featured in *An Alchemist's Guide to Cuban Coffee*

This is a recipe for cafecito, brewed in a moka pot and served sweet. Prepared as written, it makes 4 cups.

Jump to:

[Ingredients and supplies](#)

[Instructions](#)

[Substitutions and modifications](#)

Ingredients

- 4 heaping Tbsp dark roast coffee beans
- Too much sugar (at least 1 heaping Tbsp per mug)

Optional (see recipe notes)

- Whole, sweetened condensed, or non-dairy milk

Supplies

- Coffee grinder
 - Moka pot
 - Source of heat
 - Tiny mug or demitasse
 - Tiny spoon
-

Instructions

Prep

- Finely grind the dark coffee beans. (You don't have to apologize to the coffee if you bought pre-ground stuff instead. The coffee understands how busy you are.)

Step One

Prepare the moka pot. Unscrew the moka pot, set aside the teakettle-shaped top half, and remove the funnel-shaped filter basket from the base. Fill the base with cold water.

Step Two

Return the filter basket to the base of the pot and fill with the coffee grounds. Pat those grounds a bit to flatten them out, but don't push on them too hard.

Reassemble the moka pot, set it on the stovetop, and apply low heat.

Step Three

Put too much sugar in the tiny mug.

Step Four

Wait. Dancing and singing in the kitchen are both encouraged, but don't play loud music or you might miss the crucial moment of the boil. A storm will brew in the base of the moka pot. Remove the pot from the heat when just a tiny bit of espresso has boiled into the upper chamber. **Pour those first few drops into the tiny mug.**

Step Five

Return the moka pot to the heat. Use your tiny spoon to stir the sugar and espresso drops in the mug into a sweet sludge called espumita. Listen to the tempest in the moka pot as it peaks and then subsides. The upper chamber will fill with approximately four one-ounce shots of espresso. Combine one of those shots with the espumita already waiting at the bottom of your mug.

Serve

Sip slowly with old friends. Pairs well with dominos and nostalgia.

Recommended substitutions and modifications

- **Café con leche.** Warm up a glass of milk. Froth it up with something fancy if you like, but I find that a fork works pretty well. Add too much sugar and one to two shots of freshly brewed espresso.
- **Cortado.** Combine equal amounts espresso and warm milk. Omit the sugar.
- **El pecado (the sin).** Add at least two spoonfuls of sweet condensed milk to a cortado. Abuela Claudia of *In the Heights* praises this variant cafecito in her very first scene; Tinta y Café in Miami perfected it.
- **Without dairy.** Make any of these preparations using the non-dairy milk of your choice. If you're not sure where to start with non-dairy milks, try coconut milk or coconut cream for a close substitute.
- **Different sugars and substitutions:** Purists might not approve of honey, maple syrup, or alternative sweeteners, but alchemists should be open to wild experimentation. Remember that artificial sweeteners are usually sweeter than sugar by volume, so you may need to experiment with quantity. Never heat an artificial sweetener that contains aspartame. Heatsafe sweeteners include sucralose (Splenda®) and xylitol/birch sugar (XyloSweet®, Lite&Sweet®).

Don't forget: care for yourself and the people around you. Believe that the world can be better than it is now. Never give up.