SCA Barista Intermediate Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide

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Questions

1. What key measurement does a refractometer provide in coffee brewing?

A. Yield

B. Temperature

C. TDS

D. Pressure

2. Which is a best practice for steaming milk?

A. Steaming for longer than necessary

B. Using cold milk only

C. Monitoring temperature and texture carefully

D. Preheating the milk before steaming

3. What does the formula "(Yield x TDS) / Dose" calculate?

A. Brew Ratio

B. Extraction Percentage

C. Espresso Brew Formula

D. Body of Coffee

4. Why is coffee bloom significant during brewing?

A. It makes coffee more fragrant

B. It helps in even extraction and flavor development

C. It makes the coffee hotter

D. It adds sweetness to the brew

5. What is reverse osmosis used for in coffee processing?

A. To enhance flavor by brewing at higher temperatures

B. To purify water and remove unwanted minerals or compounds

C. To improve the color of the coffee

D. To add minerals beneficial for aroma

6. Why is milk frothing important for coffee drinks like cappuccinos and lattes?

- **A. It alters the color of the drink**
- **B. It creates a vacuum seal for freshness**
- **C. It adds texture and a creamy mouthfeel, enhancing the overall experience**
- **D. It lowers the temperature of the drink**

7. What defines 'single origin' coffee?

- **A. Sourced from multiple countries**
- **B. Sourced from one location**
- **C. Contains a blend of different farms**
- **D. Identical in flavor profile**

8. When a shot is made, water escapes the grouphead and runs down the portafilter. What is the most likely problem, if the portafilter is tightly in the grouphead?

- **A. The coffee beans are too fine**
- **B. The group seals are worn, and need replaced**
- **C. The machine needs descaling**
- **D. The water temperature is too high**

9. Which is an example of best practice in a cafe to avoid milk waste?

- **A. Regularly check expiration dates**
- **B. Keeping track of usage and purchasing appropriate amount of milk**
- **C. Always overstock milk supplies**
- **D. Discard unused milk at the end of the day**

10. When brewing an espresso with 17g dose and 34g yield, if the TDS is 10%, what is the extraction percentage?

- **A. 10%**
- **B. 15%**
- **C. 20%**
- **D. 25%**

Answers

1. C
2. C
3. B
4. B
5. B
6. C
7. B
8. B
9. B
10. C

Explanations

1. What key measurement does a refractometer provide in coffee brewing?

A. Yield

B. Temperature

C. TDS

D. Pressure

A refractometer is an instrument specifically used to measure the Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) in a solution, which in the context of coffee brewing translates to determining the concentration of soluble compounds extracted during the brewing process. TDS is expressed in parts per million (ppm) or as a percentage, and it gives baristas valuable insight into the strength of the brewed coffee. Monitoring TDS allows for adjustments in brewing parameters to optimize flavor extraction, as it directly correlates to how much of the coffee's soluble ingredients have been successfully dissolved into the water. This can be crucial for achieving balance and consistency in coffee brewing. While yield, temperature, and pressure are all important aspects of brewing coffee, they do not provide the comprehensive insight that TDS measurement offers when it comes to understanding extraction efficiency and balance of flavors in the final cup.

2. Which is a best practice for steaming milk?

A. Steaming for longer than necessary

B. Using cold milk only

C. Monitoring temperature and texture carefully

D. Preheating the milk before steaming

Monitoring temperature and texture carefully is essential for steaming milk effectively. This practice ensures that you achieve the desired microfoam quality, which is crucial for creating creamy, velvety textures in your beverages. When steaming, the milk should reach a temperature between 150°F to 155°F (65°C to 68°C) to achieve optimal sweetness and texture without scalding the milk. Furthermore, being attentive to the texture helps in creating a fine microfoam, which is vital for latte art and enhancing the overall mouthfeel of the drink. Proper monitoring allows the barista to control the steaming process, making adjustments as necessary to avoid overheating or producing large bubbles that can ruin the texture. In contrast, steaming for longer than necessary can overheat the milk, leading to burnt flavors and undesirable textures. Using only cold milk may not provide the best results, as it would require a longer steaming time, increasing the risk of overheating and compromising quality. Preheating the milk is generally not recommended since it can lead to unnecessary temperatures before the steaming process begins, reducing the barista's control over the final product.

3. What does the formula "(Yield x TDS) / Dose" calculate?

A. Brew Ratio

B. Extraction Percentage

C. Espresso Brew Formula

D. Body of Coffee

The formula "(Yield x TDS) / Dose" calculates the extraction percentage, which is a critical measurement in the coffee brewing process. When you break down the components of this formula, Yield refers to the total amount of brewed coffee produced, typically measured in milliliters or grams. TDS stands for Total Dissolved Solids, which represents the concentration of coffee solubles present in the brew, often measured as a percentage. Dose refers to the amount of coffee grounds used to make the brew, also typically measured in grams. By multiplying Yield with TDS, you obtain the total grams of coffee solubles that have been extracted into the liquid. Dividing this product by the Dose allows you to calculate what percentage of the coffee grounds has been dissolved in the brew. This percentage illustrates the efficiency of the extraction process, indicating how much of the coffee's soluble material has been utilized, and it is a key factor in assessing the quality and characteristics of the final cup of coffee. Hence, this formula is essential for understanding and optimizing the extraction process in brewing, making extraction percentage a vital metric for baristas aiming to improve their coffee-making technique.

4. Why is coffee bloom significant during brewing?

A. It makes coffee more fragrant

B. It helps in even extraction and flavor development

C. It makes the coffee hotter

D. It adds sweetness to the brew

Coffee bloom refers to the moment during brewing when freshly ground coffee is initially saturated with water, causing gases trapped in the coffee grounds to escape. This process is significant because it plays a critical role in ensuring even extraction and flavor development. When coffee blooms, the release of carbon dioxide allows water to penetrate the coffee grounds more uniformly during brewing. This uniform saturation is essential because it helps avoid channeling, a phenomenon where water passes through the coffee unevenly, leading to some grounds being over-extracted while others remain under-extracted. By promoting even extraction, the bloom helps in maximizing the coffee's flavors and aromas, resulting in a more balanced and richer cup of coffee. The other options focus on aspects that do not directly relate to the primary function of the bloom in the brewing process, such as fragrance, temperature, or sweetness, which do not have the same impact on the extraction process as the bloom does.

5. What is reverse osmosis used for in coffee processing?

A. To enhance flavor by brewing at higher temperatures

B. To purify water and remove unwanted minerals or compounds

C. To improve the color of the coffee

D. To add minerals beneficial for aroma

Reverse osmosis is primarily utilized in coffee processing to purify water, effectively removing unwanted minerals and compounds that can adversely affect the taste and quality of the brewed coffee. By utilizing this filtration method, water is passed through a semipermeable membrane that allows only water molecules to pass while blocking larger molecules, ions, and contaminants. This results in water that is free from impurities and tailored for optimal coffee extraction. The significance of using purified water cannot be understated, as the water quality directly influences the flavor profile of the coffee. Unwanted minerals or compounds in the water can alter the extraction process, leading to imbalanced flavors or undesirable aromas. Therefore, the use of reverse osmosis ensures that the water used in brewing is as neutral and clean as possible, allowing the inherent flavors of the coffee beans to shine through without interference from impurities. While changing brewing techniques or adding minerals can influence taste and aroma, the core function of reverse osmosis in coffee processing is focused on purification rather than enhancement through temperature adjustments or additives.

6. Why is milk frothing important for coffee drinks like cappuccinos and lattes?

A. It alters the color of the drink

B. It creates a vacuum seal for freshness

C. It adds texture and a creamy mouthfeel, enhancing the overall experience

D. It lowers the temperature of the drink

Milk frothing is a critical component in the preparation of coffee drinks such as cappuccinos and lattes primarily because it adds texture and a creamy mouthfeel, enhancing the overall sensory experience. When milk is frothed, it incorporates air, increasing its volume and creating microfoam. This microfoam not only contributes to a velvety texture but also helps to balance the flavors of the espresso, making the drink smoother and more enjoyable. Furthermore, the frothing process allows the milk to heat up and develop sweetness due to the breakdown of lactose, which adds to the complexity of the drink's flavor profile. Additionally, the microfoam serves as an excellent medium for latte art, which adds an aesthetic aspect to the drink that can enhance the customer experience. While frothing does influence the color of the drink, create a nice presentation, and play a role in temperature control, its primary importance lies in the enhancement of texture and mouthfeel which ultimately elevates the drinking experience.

7. What defines 'single origin' coffee?

A. Sourced from multiple countries

B. Sourced from one location

C. Contains a blend of different farms

D. Identical in flavor profile

Single origin coffee is defined by its sourcing from one specific location, which can be a single farm, cooperative, or a specific region within a country. This focus on a singular geographical origin allows for the unique characteristics of that location, such as climate, soil, and altitude, to influence the flavor profile of the coffee beans. As a result, single origin coffees often exhibit distinct taste notes and qualities that can be attributed to their specific growing conditions, making them highly sought after by coffee enthusiasts. In contrast, the other options describe scenarios that do not align with the concept of single origin coffee. For instance, sourcing from multiple countries or blending beans from various farms dilutes the distinctiveness associated with a particular location. Having an identical flavor profile does not necessarily indicate that the coffee is single origin, as flavor profiles can vary even among beans sourced from the same region.

8. When a shot is made, water escapes the grouphead and runs down the portafilter. What is the most likely problem, if the portafilter is tightly in the grouphead?

A. The coffee beans are too fine

B. The group seals are worn, and need replaced

C. The machine needs descaling

D. The water temperature is too high

When water escapes the grouphead and runs down the portafilter, despite the portafilter being tightly secured, this typically indicates an issue with the group seals. The group seals are responsible for creating a tight seal between the grouphead and the portafilter. If these seals are worn or damaged, they will fail to hold back the water, leading to leakage when a shot is pulled. A properly functioning machine should prevent water from escaping in this manner. If the seals are not allowing for a proper fit, the pressurized water will find an alternative path and escape. Therefore, the most likely problem in this scenario is worn group seals that require replacement to ensure a proper seal and prevent water from leaking during the espresso extraction process. Other factors, while they can impact the espresso-making process, do not directly relate to water escaping the portafilter in this context. For instance, the fineness of the coffee grounds, descaling needs, or water temperature issues would not necessarily lead to leakage at the connection point between the grouphead and the portafilter. Instead, they might affect extraction quality or flow rate, but not directly cause water to escape.

9. Which is an example of best practice in a cafe to avoid milk waste?

A. Regularly check expiration dates

B. Keeping track of usage and purchasing appropriate amount of milk

C. Always overstock milk supplies

D. Discard unused milk at the end of the day

Utilizing a system to keep track of milk usage and purchasing the appropriate amount is an effective best practice in a café to minimize milk waste. This approach involves monitoring how much milk is used daily or weekly and then adjusting orders accordingly to prevent both overstocking and running out of supplies. By accurately estimating demand, cafés can ensure that they have just the right amount of milk on hand, thus reducing the likelihood of milk spoiling before it can be used. Regularly checking expiration dates can help manage existing stock but does not address the core issue of ordering too much milk in the first place. Overstocking milk supplies may lead to a surplus that can easily go unused and spoil, which is counterproductive in a waste reduction strategy. Discarding unused milk at the end of the day is a reactive measure rather than a proactive strategy, ultimately contributing to waste rather than preventing it. Thus, tracking usage allows for better forecasting and purchasing, directly targeting and improving inventory management to save resources and reduce waste.

10. When brewing an espresso with 17g dose and 34g yield, if the TDS is 10%, what is the extraction percentage?

A. 10%

B. 15%

C. 20%

D. 25%

To find the extraction percentage when brewing espresso, the relationship between the total dissolved solids (TDS), the yield (the amount of brewed espresso), and the coffee dose is fundamental. The formula used to calculate the extraction percentage is as follows: $$\text{Extraction Percentage} = \left(\frac{\text{TDS} \times \text{Yield}}{\text{Dose}} \right) \times 100$$ In this scenario, you have a dose of 17 grams, a yield of 34 grams, and a TDS of 10%. Plugging these values into the formula gives: $$\text{Extraction Percentage} = \left(\frac{10\% \times 34g}{17g} \right) \times 100$$ $$\text{Extraction Percentage} = \left(\frac{3.4g}{17g} \right) \times 100 = 20\%$$ This calculation shows that when you extract coffee, the TDS indicates how much solid coffee is dissolved in the liquid. The ratio of the dissolved solids to the original coffee (in grams) informs us about how much of the available coffee solubles were extracted. In this case