

SCA Barista Intermediate Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

Copyright © 2025 by Examzify - A Kaluba Technologies Inc. product.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transferred in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, web distribution, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the written permission of the author.

Notice: Examzify makes every reasonable effort to obtain from reliable sources accurate, complete, and timely information about this product.

SAMPLE

Questions

- 1. What is the primary component of milk that makes up the largest percentage?**
 - A. Fat**
 - B. Protein**
 - C. Water**
 - D. Lactose**
- 2. How do Arabica and Robusta coffee beans differ?**
 - A. Arabica is sweeter and more complex, while Robusta is stronger and more bitter with higher caffeine content**
 - B. Robusta beans are more aromatic compared to Arabica**
 - C. Arabica is typically used for instant coffee, while Robusta is not**
 - D. Robusta beans require less water during cultivation**
- 3. What does FIFO stand for in inventory management?**
 - A. First In First Out**
 - B. First In Final Out**
 - C. First In Follow Out**
 - D. First In Fail Out**
- 4. What is the significance of pressure in espresso extraction?**
 - A. Pressure is crucial for forcing hot water through the coffee grounds, creating a well-extracted espresso with rich crema.**
 - B. Pressure affects the temperature at which coffee brews.**
 - C. Pressure has no significant role in espresso extraction.**
 - D. Pressure is only important in the grinding process of coffee.**
- 5. What can occur if tamping and distribution of coffee are done poorly?**
 - A. Improved extraction quality**
 - B. Increased chance of channeling**
 - C. Faster brewing time**
 - D. Consistent flavor throughout**

- 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. It is recommended that baristas use a minimum of three different cloths when preparing drinks; what is the most appropriate use of them?**
- A. One for counter, two for personal use**
 - B. Two for counter, one for personal use**
 - C. Counter, Portafilter, steam wand**
 - D. One for counter, one for the steam wand, and one for personal use**
- 8. What is a common mistake when brewing coffee?**
- A. Using too much coffee grounds**
 - B. Using the incorrect grind size**
 - C. Not brewing for long enough**
 - D. Using water that is too cold**
- 9. Which aspect of coffee is most associated with its aroma?**
- A. Acidity**
 - B. Body**
 - C. Aftertaste**
 - D. Flavor profile**
- 10. What limits the ability of plant-based milks to foam?**
- A. Sugar content**
 - B. Fat content**
 - C. Protein content**
 - D. Water content**

Answers

SAMPLE

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

SAMPLE

Explanations

SAMPLE

1. What is the primary component of milk that makes up the largest percentage?

- A. Fat**
- B. Protein**
- C. Water**
- D. Lactose**

The primary component of milk that comprises the largest percentage is water. In most types of milk, particularly cow's milk, water accounts for about 87% of the total composition. This high water content is essential for various functions, including maintaining hydration in both dairy animals and humans. Understanding the composition of milk is vital for baristas because it affects how milk behaves when steamed or frothed. Knowing that water is the predominant ingredient allows baristas to make informed decisions about how different milk types and temperatures will interact when adding to coffee or other beverages. While fat, protein, and lactose are indeed significant components of milk that contribute to flavor, texture, and nutrition, their percentages are lower when compared to water. Fat typically makes up about 3-4% of whole milk, protein about 3-4%, and lactose around 4-5%. Recognizing the importance of water not only helps in understanding milk's properties but also in enhancing the overall quality of milk-based drinks.

2. How do Arabica and Robusta coffee beans differ?

- A. Arabica is sweeter and more complex, while Robusta is stronger and more bitter with higher caffeine content**
- B. Robusta beans are more aromatic compared to Arabica**
- C. Arabica is typically used for instant coffee, while Robusta is not**
- D. Robusta beans require less water during cultivation**

Arabica and Robusta coffee beans have distinct flavor profiles and characteristics that make them different from one another. Arabica beans are known for their sweeter flavor and greater complexity, often exhibiting a range of nuanced taste notes such as fruitiness and acidity. This complexity makes them highly sought after by specialty coffee drinkers. In contrast, Robusta beans tend to have a stronger, more bitter flavor due to their higher caffeine content, which also makes them more resilient in terms of pest resistance and adaptability to various growing conditions. Additionally, the higher caffeine level in Robusta not only contributes to its more pronounced bitterness but also gives it a unique advantage in certain blends and espresso formulations where a strong flavor and creamy body are desired. Understanding these taste nuances is essential for anyone involved in selecting, brewing, or serving coffee, as it can greatly influence the experience of the drinker. While the other options present some truths—such as the cultivation needs and the common uses of different beans—they don't capture the primary distinctions in flavor and caffeine content that make option A the most accurate and relevant.

3. What does FIFO stand for in inventory management?

- A. First In First Out**
- B. First In Final Out**
- C. First In Follow Out**
- D. First In Fail Out**

FIFO stands for "First In First Out," which is a method used in inventory management to ensure that the oldest stock (or inventory) is sold or used before the newer stock. This practice is particularly important in industries such as food and beverage, where perishable items have a limited shelf life. By utilizing the FIFO method, businesses can minimize waste and reduce the risk of expired or outdated products being sold to customers. The principle behind FIFO is that the items added to inventory first are the ones to be sold or removed first. This helps in keeping inventory fresh and improves product turnover. For example, in a coffee shop, older coffee beans should be used first to ensure quality, while newer beans are kept for later use. In contrast, the other options do not accurately capture the essence of this inventory management method, with each suggesting an incorrect sequence or interpretation of inventory flow.

4. What is the significance of pressure in espresso extraction?

- A. Pressure is crucial for forcing hot water through the coffee grounds, creating a well-extracted espresso with rich crema.**
- B. Pressure affects the temperature at which coffee brews.**
- C. Pressure has no significant role in espresso extraction.**
- D. Pressure is only important in the grinding process of coffee.**

The significance of pressure in espresso extraction lies in its essential role in creating the perfect cup of espresso. Pressure is crucial for forcing hot water through finely packed coffee grounds at a specific rate. This process leads to a thorough extraction of flavors and oils, resulting in a rich and complex profile for the espresso shot. Additionally, the high pressure during extraction enables the formation of crema—a layer of golden foam on top of the espresso. Crema adds to the visual appeal and contributes to the aroma and flavor experience of the drink. A well-extracted espresso utilizing the correct pressure will not only yield a desirable texture and taste but also enhance the overall coffee experience for the consumer. The other options don't capture the critical relationship between pressure and extraction in the espresso-making process. While temperature and grinding are important factors, they do not inherently emphasize the pivotal role that pressure plays in achieving the desired characteristics of a quality espresso shot.

5. What can occur if tamping and distribution of coffee are done poorly?

- A. Improved extraction quality**
- B. Increased chance of channeling**
- C. Faster brewing time**
- D. Consistent flavor throughout**

When tamping and distribution of coffee are performed poorly, one significant consequence is an increased chance of channeling. Channeling occurs when water finds paths of least resistance as it flows through the coffee puck, leading to uneven extraction. This uneven saturation can cause certain areas of the coffee to be over-extracted while others remain under-extracted. If the coffee grounds are not evenly distributed and tamped with consistent pressure, it creates gaps and inconsistencies in the puck. As water flows through these areas, it will travel more quickly through the less dense portions, avoiding the denser areas where the coffee is tamped more firmly. This results in an imbalanced extraction process, ultimately affecting the overall flavor and quality of the brewed coffee. In contrast, a well-tamped and evenly distributed coffee puck allows for a uniform flow of water, promoting balanced extraction, which enhances the final flavor profile and overall quality of the espresso.

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. It is recommended that baristas use a minimum of three different cloths when preparing drinks; what is the most appropriate use of them?

A. One for counter, two for personal use

B. Two for counter, one for personal use

C. Counter, Portafilter, steam wand

D. One for counter, one for the steam wand, and one for personal use

Using three different cloths while preparing drinks is essential for maintaining cleanliness and ensuring that each component of the espresso machine and workspace is properly cared for. The recommended usage of one cloth for the counter, one for the portafilter, and one for the steam wand strikes a balance that maximizes hygiene and efficiency. The cloth designated for the counter helps keep the workspace clean and free of any coffee grounds or spills, creating a safe and pleasant environment. The cloth for the portafilter is crucial because it ensures that the coffee-making component is wiped down and kept free of oils and residue that can affect the quality of the coffee and lead to contamination. Finally, the cloth used for the steam wand is specifically intended to keep it clean and avoid milk residue buildup, which is essential for both hygiene and the proper functioning of the steam wand for frothing milk effectively. This approach not only facilitates a higher quality beverage but also establishes best practices in sanitation and workflow efficiency in a coffee shop setting.

8. What is a common mistake when brewing coffee?

A. Using too much coffee grounds

B. Using the incorrect grind size

C. Not brewing for long enough

D. Using water that is too cold

Using the incorrect grind size is a common mistake when brewing coffee because it can significantly impact the extraction process and, subsequently, the flavor of the coffee. Each brewing method has an optimal grind size that corresponds to the time the coffee is in contact with water. For instance, a coarse grind is typically suitable for methods like French press, which involves longer brewing times, while a fine grind is ideal for espresso, requiring a quick extraction. If the grind size is not appropriate for the brewing method chosen, it can lead to under-extraction or over-extraction, resulting in a cup that lacks balance and complexity. Proper grind size ensures that the flavors are adequately extracted and contributes to achieving the desired taste profile of the final brew.

9. Which aspect of coffee is most associated with its aroma?

- A. Acidity**
- B. Body**
- C. Aftertaste**
- D. Flavor profile**

The aroma of coffee plays a critical role in the overall sensory experience, and it is closely linked with the flavor profile. Aroma contributes significantly to how we perceive flavor, as our sense of smell greatly influences our taste perception. The various compounds released when coffee is brewed form the unique characteristics of its aroma, which interacts with our taste buds to create a comprehensive flavor experience. While acidity, body, and aftertaste are important components of coffee's characteristics, they do not specifically address the aspect of aroma as closely as the flavor profile does. Acidity pertains to the brightness and sharpness perceived in coffee, body refers to the weight or thickness of the coffee on the palate, and aftertaste indicates the lingering flavors after swallowing. However, aroma encompasses a wide range of volatile compounds that primarily define the coffee's flavor profile, making this answer the most accurate in relation to the question asked.

10. What limits the ability of plant-based milks to foam?

- A. Sugar content**
- B. Fat content**
- C. Protein content**
- D. Water content**

The ability of plant-based milks to foam is significantly influenced by their protein content. Foaming is primarily dependent on the presence of proteins that can stabilize air bubbles when milk is frothed. In many plant-based milks, the protein structures are different than those in cow's milk, which can affect how effectively they can foam. Proteins contribute to the formation of a stable foam by trapping air bubbles and providing structure. In plant-based milks, the types and amounts of protein vary greatly depending on the source, such as soy, almond, oat, or coconut. For instance, soy milk contains a higher concentration of proteins that can foam effectively, while almond milk has considerably lower protein content and may not foam as well. Other components, like fat content and sugar content, do play roles in the overall texture and mouthfeel of the milk when frothed, but they do not directly limit the foaming ability as much as protein content does. Water content might affect the general consistency of the milk, but again, it does not address the foaming characteristic directly related to protein interaction. Therefore, the protein content is the critical factor in determining a plant-based milk's ability to create foam when steamed or frothed.