How to texture milk.

If making espresso is an art form this is like learning a craft, but once mastered it's easy enough.

The heat and texture of the milk you add to your espresso base will determine the quality and the temperature of your finished coffee.

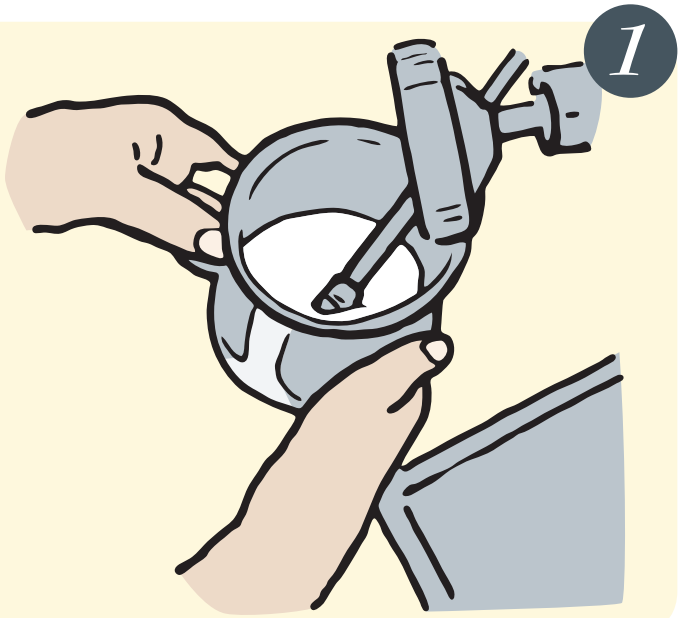
The milk texture that you are aiming for is best described as velvet. That means it's about 70°C with a nice fine bead of bubbles.

Follow the 4 steps and you'll be producing great milk every time.

THE MILK.

We'll assume you can make an excellent espresso (the base for latte's and flat whites), so now let's talk milk. Using a stainless steel jug, fill the milk to around half way, refrigerated or room temperature milk is fine.

Place the steam wand of your espresso machine under the surface of the milk and turn the steam tap fully on.



STRETCHING AND TEXTURISING.

Now gently lower the milk jug so the tip of the steam wand is just under the milk's surface. Keeping the jug as steady as possible allow the steam wand to gently gasp the air right on the surface of the milk.

Slowly change the angle between the surface of the milk and the steam wand until you create a whirlpool effect. Listen for the gentle sound of the air being drawn into the milk.

If the noise is too loud then the milk surface is too far away from the tip of the steam wand and rather than a fine bead of bubbles you will see a very frothy texture being created.

Try for an effect similar to that of beating cream, gently folding air through the milk. At all times keep a steady hand, do not jiggle the jug up and down. Once textured, the volume of milk should have almost doubled.

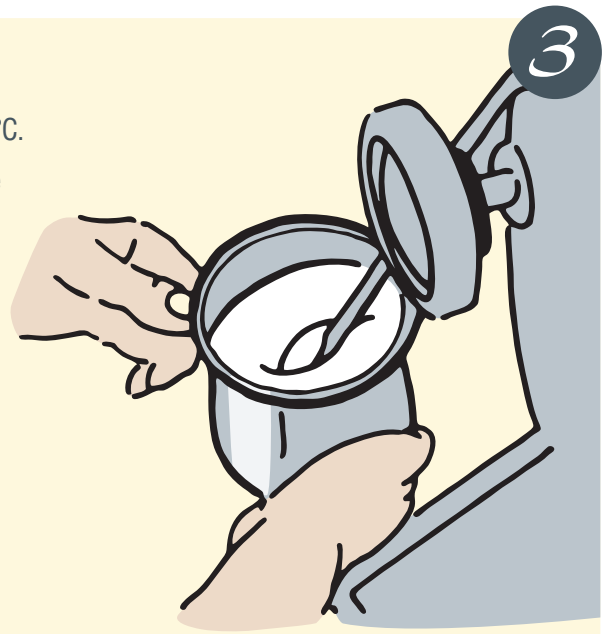
HEATING.

Once you have the milk texture correct, lower the steam wand into the milk and complete the heating process.

If you can hold your fingers against the bottom of the jug for around 3 to 4 seconds, the milk temperature will be around 70°C.That's the milk texture taken care of. Now let's talk espresso temperature and why it's important. The espresso when it is extracted into your cup has a temperature of approximately 90°C.

When you heat your milk it will be about 70°C - any hotter and it will scorch, ruining the taste.

So how do you now add the milk to the espresso without making the resulting latte or flat white stone cold? You MUST heat the cups. If your espresso machine has a facility to heat cups, great, if not heat them with hot water prior to use.



THE POUR.

Once you have heated and textured the milk, you're ready to pour it into your espresso base.

With a spoon, gently groom the surface of the milk, skimming off any overly frothy milk. The milk surface should now be glossy and have a nice fine bead of bubbles.

Gently bang the bottom of the jug on the bench top to settle the milk. Very slowly, with the jug close to the top of the cup, allow the milk to slowly roll off the lip of the jug and into the cup. Continue the pour in a gentle continuous motion.

Remember to watch what's happening at the lip of the jug, as this determines the quality of the milk going into your espresso.

If the milk becomes too thin or thick, stop the pour, gently bang the jug on the counter top, groom the surface again with your spoon until it's shiny and resume the pour. This all sounds more difficult than it actually is. Try it. You will throw out a few coffees to begin with, but once you've mastered the craft of making lattes and flat whites, you'll enjoy some of the most luxurious coffees to be had.

TROUBLE SHOOTING.

Overly bubbly and frothy milk is caused by allowing too much air into the milk as you heat it. Thin flat milk is the result of not introducing any air into the milk as you heat it, or using milk that has previously been heated. If you are still having problems bring in a pint of milk and we will be happy to show you how it's done.