

General Home Roasting Observations for **HotTop Coffee Roaster** from *Sweet Maria's*

Read your owners manual for the HotTop before using. This is a supplemental “tip sheet” only. **Be safe! Never leave the room while you are roasting coffee, even though the roaster is automated.** Make sure the machine is on a level surface.

- As a larger capacity 1/2 Lb. roaster, the HotTop will produce more smoke than other home roasters. Venting is mandatory: We recommend using the machine under a stovetop hood vented to the outside. You can roast on a porch or near a partially open window weather permitting. Cold temperatures effect the roast, and may make the roast stall completely!
- Roasting produces chaff. Chaff is a fine skin that detaches from the bean as your roast is agitated. Empty the chaff tray between every roast. Every few roasts, tip the HotTop forward to remove any residual chaff and beans that are trapped around the chaff tray compartment, and consider using a vacuum to suck out any residual chaff or beans in the roast compartment, removing the drum (see HotTop booklet). **PLEASE NOTE:** Dry processed coffees have more chaff and so you will need to watch the roast carefully and pay extra attention to removing chaff after the roast. Some Yemeni coffees have shown to present a greater danger of a chaff fire on a dark roast - so be especially careful. You may want to have a fire extinguisher or water nearby in case of a chaff fire.
- Built-up coffee oils in the roaster are of no real consequence until they build up to 1/16”;. (In fact, a professional drum roaster requires hours of roasting initially to properly season the drum). But you are going to need to clean the viewing glass (every 3-4 roasts, it seems).
- We have found the HotTop is very sensitive to changes in the WEIGHT of the green coffee you use in a batch. You must weigh the coffee, and be consistent! 9 oz. (250 grams) is the recommended roast batch size. If you are not getting roasts dark enough to your taste, you can reduce the batch size to 7 or 8 oz, and effectively shift the entire roast range toward a darker roast. Whatever you chose, be consistent with batch size.
- The HotTop will consistently produce the same degree of roast at the same settings when it does its first roast of the day (or is absolutely cold). We have found that subsequent roasts vary depending on how “hot” the machine is from the previous roast. The Pre Heat Cycle is supposed to take care of this variable, but doesn't always. Even when using a custom profile, we recommend that you monitor the end of every roast, adding additional time if necessary and hitting the eject button to end the roast when doing subsequent batches. This allows you to target the exact degree of roast that you want, although it is less convenient than relying on the automated presets.
- We recommend that you use the preset programs on both the Basic and the Programmable models first to see how the roaster will behave before programming different custom profiles. From our experience every roaster will behave slightly differently due to differences in line voltage and ambient temperature. Check the HotTop manual for information on using the presets and programming custom roast profiles.
- I have found the HotTop cooling cycle to be very effective, so let it do its job, and transfer the coffee to glass jars when it is room temperature. Coffee is better after 4-24 hours of “resting”, which allows the CO2 to de-gas from the coffee. It is at its flavor peak at 12-72 hours. For espresso, sometimes it is best on the 4th or 5th day!

In a nutshell, here is the roasting process you will be observing:

- For the first 8 minutes the bean remains greenish, then turn lighter and emit a grassy smell. The beans start to steam as their internal water content dissipates. The steam becomes fragrant
- At around 15-17 minutes on the HotTop you will hear the "first crack," an audible cracking sound as the real roasting starts to occur: sugars begin to caramelize, bound-up water escapes, the structure of the bean breaks down and oils migrate from their little pockets outward.
- After the first crack, the roast can be considered complete any time according to your taste. The cracking is an audible cue, and, along with sight and smell, tells you what stage the roast is at. Taste of the resulting roast is the most important thing. Caramelization continues, oils migrate, and the bean expands in size.
- At this point a "second crack" can be heard, often more volatile than the first. Small pieces of the bean are sometimes blown away like shrapnel! This happens around 19-20 minutes on my HotTop. Use the PLUS button to add time to the roast during the final roast stage (the roaster beeps to let you know it is almost done).
- As the roast becomes very dark, the smoke is more pungent (oils burn against the hot surfaces of the roast chamber) as sugars burn completely, and the bean structure breaks down more and more. Eventually, the sugars burn completely, and the roast will only result in thin-bodied cup of "charcoal water."
- HotTop provides an excellent 1 Year warranty (via HotTop USA) on the roaster; they handle all repairs and replacements directly. Our email order confirmation provides proof of purchase. Call them directly (401) 497-1008 if you ever have a mechanical defect problem with the roaster. And READ their important, well-written instruction book!!! Email us if you have roasting questions (tom@sweetmarias.com).