



My Coffee Capsule

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NOT ALL FILLED COFFEE CAPSULES ARE EQUAL



In the market, there has developed a number of Nespresso compatible filled coffee capsules. Nespresso still enjoy an impressive lead in market share over their closest rivals.

Attempts by competing interests to cash-in on the popularity of the Nespresso capsule has led to a bewildering proliferation of alternative filled capsules. This short article attempts to examine some of these filled coffee capsules.

The battle for a slice of the Nespresso market is being waged on two fronts:

1. Companies offering their own coffee machines with their own type of capsules
2. Companies offering only Nespresso compatible filled capsules.

I have tested 4 different Nespresso compatible filled capsules from South Africa, Italy and France.

One of the 2 Italian and the French capsules are from well known international coffee houses. The rest are new names to the market who promote sales under a general coffee brand name or through white branding.

My tests were limited to making ristrettos and long blacks, a sufficient criterion to enable a reasonable judgement of taste and ease of use.

The stylish Italian capsule has each capsule elegantly presented in its own dark packaging. The offering consists of 4 different blends. The capsules are made from semi translucent light chocolate coloured plastic. The “construction” of the capsules is robust, certainly a better design than other capsules we tested.

The shelf life stamped on the packaging was for 2 years. I tried their “Intenso” and “Decaf”. The capsules worked faultlessly with my Nespresso machine as far as flow, consistency and crema. I found the aroma restrained with some staleness in the taste. This is a reasonable acceptable coffee but quality lags in my opinion, behind Nespresso

The South African capsules offered 6 different blends with each capsule having a different colour. The packet of 10, similar in shape the Nespresso pack is colourful and pleasingly presented. It is not however easy to unpack as the capsules were tightly jammed in the packaging.

I used a Nespresso Delonghi U machine for my testing and the first two capsules produced an imprint on the aluminium lid but without any perforation taking place. The third capsule worked but with a slow water flow. The taste of the coffee was reasonable but the coffee left a very unpleasant and dry after taste that significantly decreased my enjoyment of the coffee.



This capsule sadly lacks the qualities that we have come to expect from a Nespresso Capsule.

The French made capsules are readily available in supermarkets in boxes of 10 capsules, each in its own foil sealed wrapping. 4 blends are on offer. These capsules are from a major coffee company. The boxes and individual wrappings are attractively presented and are ideal for supermarket shelf positioning. Upon opening the wrapping there was an ephemeral whiff of fresh coffee that quickly dissipated. The naked capsule emitted little smell of fresh coffee leading me to assume that the fresh smells escape from the capsule into the sealed wrapping.



Foil imprint and good perforation (A Nespresso Capsule)

The coffee was lacklustre, lacked the strength in intensity when compared to the Nespresso capsule. The results were less than impressive in lungo mode. One disturbing aspect was that the capsules did not work on the new Nespresso Delonghi U model, making them not entirely Nespresso compatible as claimed. I found the quality of the coffee to be, once again, inferior to Nespresso.



Foil imprint and poor perforation from a compatible capsule

Nespresso capsules are made from a light aluminium material with beautiful metallic and plain colours and are superbly packaged. They are also quite superior in their ergonomic design than their challengers. The Nespresso literature and website is very impressive. Whatever their competition does, Nespresso capsules remain for the time being the standard bearers in terms of quality and presentation.

All pre-filled capsules, including Nespresso have their shortcoming:

- a limited range of coffees
- extended shelf life precludes freshness of content
- produced in factories as part of a mass industrial production process
- the origin of the coffee is often unknown
- few suppliers offer customer support and advice
- a compromise of quality for price
- inability to support Australian local growers and roasters
- may contain “treated” coffee to preserve freshness and enhance taste
- some are less eco-friendly than others
- some capsules, particularly those produced in countries with poorly regulated industries, may present health hazards
- Some non Nespresso capsules are not compatible with all Nespresso models
- Some non Nespresso capsules experience poor water flow delivery due to the contents being over packed

In light of the above, it appears that Nespresso deserve their current market domination. The capsules produced a superior coffee and were consistent in both taste and ease of use. My personal opinion, however, still favours the empty Capsul'in filled with freshly ground coffee which offers the best of both worlds. It turns your Nespresso machine into a regular espresso machine with the empty capsule becoming a disposable basket for your choice of any freshly ground coffee

