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Other Bellwether articles

Business, marketplace, marketing, brewing, and account articles from the public help center. They are not roaster troubleshooting.

Buying Green Coffee + Marketplace FAQs

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You have a vision for your coffee menu—we’re here to help you bring it to life. We make it easy to identify the coffees that’ll serve your business needs and delight your customers.

BClifton-09272018-DSC_6461-SharpenAI-Standard

Every Marketplace coffee is rich with background information, including:

– **Full traceability to the producer**

– **Tasting notes and coffee plant variety**

– **Farm awards and certifications**

– **Marketing support, including farm stories and images**

– **No-nonsense, competitive pricing**

Search through our curated green coffee menu using a variety of filters. When you find a winner, simply order and we'll ship the beans directly to you in easy-to-store, easy-to-carry boxes. If you're roasting at larger volumes, we offer the option to purchase green coffee by the bag as well.

Marketplace FAQs

How do I place an order through the Bellwether Marketplace?

To order 24lb boxes or 132-154lb bags of coffee through the Marketplace, please follow these steps:

1. Visitstore.bellwethercoffee.com on any device.
2. Log in using your Bellwether Admin credentials.
3. Select the coffee you would like to purchase and Add to Cart.
4. Tap on the shopping cart icon in the top right corner of your screen and tap Checkout.
5. Select any shipping or delivery specifications at checkout. For more information see Shipping & Checkout FAQs.
6. Place your order!

Canadian Customers: How to Order Coffee

Canadian customers can view up to date inventory and pricing for green coffee here.
Please reach out to your Customer Success Manager and they will guide you through the ordering process.

What can I do in the Marketplace?

Buy coffee from any device– The Marketplace is hosted online, so you can access the store anytime and from any device.

Buy boxes *and* bags in one place– Bellwether is the first green coffee supplier in the industry to create automated freight shipping for whole bags of coffee. You can buy and ship whole bags and pallets of coffee to your door with the same click-and-ship convenience of boxes. You can see live freight quotes for your region before you order.

Enjoy flexible payment options – We've added flexible payment options so you can now buy coffee using credit, debit, ACH, or Credit Key.For more information on the payment options available, please refer to this article.

Search better, faster – Quickly and effortlessly see the whole menu at once, navigate coffees by origin, flavor profile, or impact.

See alerts to help you stay ahead– Easily see alerts for coffee inventory levels so you can plan your inventory on the fly.

How do I know I'm getting the best shipping rate and carrier on my pallets of coffee? Not every carrier is the same and rates are variable.

Our custom shipping tool pulls a dozen or more live freight quotes from carriers based on the criteria you enter (business location, liftgate request, etc.). Our software chooses the 3 cheapest quotes and averages them to provide a flat rate to you. Behind the scenes, our team views the 3 carriers that were averaged to produce that rate and chooses the best and most reliable option for your order.

How do I know if I need a liftgate?

If you don't have a loading dock or a forklift, you need a liftgate for delivery.

Liftgates are mechanical elevators on the back of some trucks that allow them to lower pallets to the ground in the event that you don't have the equipment or a loading dock to receive with.

Liftgates can be extremely expensive which may be jarring to customers who notice their shipping rate changes drastically with a liftgate option selected. Unfortunately, there's no way around this. If a pallet gets delivered to a location without a dock or a forklift, they won't deliver your coffee and it will be returned.

What is the shipping time frame?

Orders placed through the Marketplace are processed same day if your order is placed by 11 AM Pacific Time. Your coffee may ship from different warehouse locations, so your purchases may ship separately or on different days.

If you're located in California, it will take approximately two business days for your green coffee order to arrive**and up to 5-7 business days if you're outside of CA. We suggest having a month's worth of green coffee on-hand and/or being aware of your inventory levels, so you don't run out.**

When ordering bags of green coffee, the estimated delivery time can vary depending on proximity to either the NJ or CA warehouse. In general, most orders will arrive within 7-10 business days, but we highly recommend ordering 2-3 weeks before needing the coffee, as delays can occur with freight shipping.

Can I pick my coffee order up from the warehouse?

We work with two warehouses in the United States. They are located in Alameda, CA and Carteret, NJ. During the checkout process, you will be given the opportunity to choose warehouse pick up as a convenient option. If this works for you, simply select it and proceed with your order.

Are your Bellwether Marketplace coffees from a single origin? I'm seeing a different variety of names.

There is a distinction between single-origin and single-varietal or single-cultivar.

On coffee farms, multiple varieties or cultivars are often grown together for several reasons. I could be to add diversification, to protect from disease, to experiment, to mitigate risk, or because that's just what was planted. In saying that, there are

coffees that are both single-variety and single-origin. For example, Brazilian coffee is often single-origin and variety.

Another example of single-origin coffees that are often grown with a mix of varieties is coffee from Ethiopia. Ethiopian coffees often list “mixed heirloom landraces” or “Ethiopia Heirloom” as the variety. Ethiopian coffee farms almost always contain a mix of native and endemic varieties

What are tasting notes?

Tasting notes point to specific flavor attributes of the coffee and can be influenced by origin, processing, roast, and other elements.

Are the Bellwether Marketplace coffees stored in GrainPro bags?

Yes! All of the coffee in the Bellwether Marketplace are packaged in GrainPro bags. It is very rare that we will get a coffee in that is not.

Do the Bellwether Marketplace coffees go through an optical sorter at origin?

Yes, the vast majority of Bellwether Marketplace’s coffee offerings go through an optical sorter at the origin. Almost all specialty coffees get sorted via optical sorter these days.

Are the Bellwether Marketplace coffees density sorted?

Yes! All of the Bellwether Marketplace coffees are density sorted.

Coffee Business Supplies

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Check out this article to uncover some additional items you may need to help you operate your coffee roastery!

What Supplies Do I Need?

Roasting is just the beginning of your coffee journey.

Once you've roasted your coffee, you'll want to make sure you've got all the supplies you need to run a successful operation.

While your bagging and production supplies won't take up much space, you'll need to decide everything you need to get going and set up a small area for storage and production of your roasted coffee. We're making it easy to start by listing and linking some of our favorite products in coffee production.

A few of our favorite Suppliers:

We've worked with hundreds of vendors and partners over the years, and these 3 are our go-to life-long partners for coffee-related supplies (and more!).

- PLC Print: Our one-stop-shop for printed-anything—if you can imagine it, they can print it! Anything is possible with PLC. This amazing shop is owned and operated by people of color out of Berkeley, CA, and across the street from our very first office(garage)!
- StickerMule: a great source for coffee labels if your menu changes often. Their lowest minimum order is 50; it's our go-to spot to get low quantities, but the bigger the order, the bigger the discount! We use StickerMule for the labels on

our coffee bags, green coffee orders, shipping boxes, welcome kits, tech kits, bagging kits, and more. We're proud to work with StickerMule, a company that wanted to make an industry better, which many said would be "impossible" to do... sound familiar? 😉
- SavorBrands is the company that makes our Bellwether-branded coffee bags and is a leader in coffee packaging. Savor Brands is dedicated to innovative packaging solutions for a more sustainable future of coffee - Bellwether's values through and through! We love the team at SavorBrands and are proud to call them a Bellwether partner.

Scales

Having a reliable scale that is fast, appropriate in size, and able to handle the weight and resolution value required for the task is important. For example, a small, fast scale, that can fit under your portafilter and on your drip tray may not be able to handle or be a good size for weighing out 6lb lbs of green coffee for a roast or weighing 5lbs of roasted coffee for a bulk bag. Additionally, some scales have rechargeable batteries, some require batteries, and some can be plugged directly into the wall outlet. You'll need to choose scales that match your needs.

Here are a few suggestions for scales we recommend for different tasks for your coffee business at a variety of different price points:

Scales For Weighing Roasted Coffee

Scales for weighing out your roasted coffee for serving or filing your retail bags are relatively easy to find and most of the scales above will do the trick. However, if you are weighing out 5lbs bags of coffee for bulk or wholesale consumption you might need something with a little more weighing capacity. Additionally, advertised weight on your packaging is required by law.

Here are a few suggestions, including their weight limits and accuracy (generally speaking, accuracy goes down the more weight you have on the platter):

- **Accuteck ShipPro Digital Scale** **$40** (110lb weight limit / 2g or 0.1oz accuracy)
- **Acacia Pearl** **$150** (11lb weight limit / 0.003oz or 0.1g accuracy)

- **Gator Coffee Scale** **$24** (6.6lb weight limit / 0.003oz or 0.1g accuracy)

Scales For Weighing Green Coffee

For weighing our green coffee in preparation for roasting, a scale with a high weight capacity and a larger weighing platter or surface is ideal. Here are a few scales that are good for this:

- **Detecto Scale 150lb Max** **$155**
- **Accuteck Heavy Duty Digital Scale** **$70**
- **Accuteck ShipPro Digital Scale** **$40**

Espresso Portafilter and Grinder Area Scales

You'll want something that is fast reading and has a platter size that can fit the portafilter comfortably.

1. **Acacia Pearl** **$150**
2. **Hario V600 Drip Coffee Scale** **$56**
3. **Jennings CJ-4000** **$34**

Espresso Liquid Scales

For weighing out your espresso liquid, you'll need a scale that is small enough to fit on your drip tray, fits underneath your portafilter and cup, and is fast reading. A note on these, having a water-resistant scale is preferable for this task, but not necessary.

1. **AWS Series Digital** **$17**
2. **Acaia Lunar** **$225 (water-resistant)**
3. **Brewista Smart Scale II** **$90 (water-resistant)**

Drip Coffee & Pour Over Bar Scales

A scale that works great for weighing coffee out for you batch-brewer, tea, and for manual brewing, etc., is a necessary scale to have behind a coffee bar. For manual

brewing, it can be handy to have a built-in timer, but it is not necessary. This scale needs to be able to handle a little more weight than the espresso preparation scales.

1. **Acacia Pearl $150**
2. **Hario V600 Drip Coffee Scale $56**
3. **Jennings CJ-4000 $34**
4. **TOMIBA Digital Scale$12**
5. **Etekcity Digital Scale$14**
6. **Gator Coffee Scale $24**

Coffee Scoops

We suggest using separate scoops for your green and roasted coffee because it is best to avoid cross-contamination of green and roasted coffee beans. Green coffee dust can end up on roasted coffee, tainting the flavor. Either a metal or plastic scoop will work. It's nice to have a larger scoop for weighing out green coffee in preparation for roasting like these:

- **Winco AS-58ozAluminum Scoop$22**
- **California 38oz Cooking Scoop $17**
- **CCK ScoopAluminum58oz $20**

For bagging or weighing roasted coffee, it's a little easier to have a couple of smaller scoops handy like these:

- **Winco AS-24oz Aluminum Scoop $13**
- **CCK 12oz Aluminum Scoop $15**
- **Update International 24oz Aluminum Scoop $13**

Buckets, Containers, and Bins for Green and Roasted Coffee

Depending on how much room you have and how much roasting you are doing, buckets, containers, or bins around can be very helpful. Whether you are storing and blending green or roasted coffee, roasting multiple batches in one session, or

want to cut down on your single-use coffee bags, having the right-sized container available can make your coffee roasting operation a lot easier.

Green coffee storage can often be a little easier to organize. Boxes and bags of green often come in Grain-Pro bags, which are perfect for green coffee storage.

You will want to make sure you store your green coffee in a cool, dry place free from cleaning products or fragrant foods. Remember, green coffee is porous and can absorb smells from nearby materials. Also, be sure green coffee is stored separately from roasted coffee to avoid cross-contamination.

If you want to transfer your green coffee out of the Grain-Pro bag into a different container, here are a few suggestions:

- **Rubbermaid Brute 10Gallon $23**
- **Baytec 5 Gallon Food Safe Bucket 3 Pack$18**
- **Rubbermaid Brute 20 Gallon with Lid & Dolly$54**

For roasted coffee, it's convenient to have buckets that you can easily label, stack, carry, and scoop from for bagging. Here are a few that we suggest:

- **Rubbermaid Brute 10Gallon $23**
- **Cambro 5.5 Gallon Pail $18,(Lid For Pail $4)**
- **Baytec 5 Gallon Food Safe Bucket with Lids 3 pack$75**

An Impulse Bag Sealer For Your Coffee Bags

When you start to bag your own coffee for retail, you will need a sealer to seal the bags. A tabletop hand-operated bag sealer works perfectly well.

- **ROMECH Impluse Bag Sealer $39**

If you require a sealer that can handle a little more volume and is a little faster, here are a few options:

- **IMPAK Foot-Operated Impulse Sealers$205-265**
- **Metronic 12 Inch Impulse Sealer$65**
- **Sealer Sales WNS-200D Table Top Direct Heat Sealer$870**

Having these essential items will help to make your roasting operation consistent, efficient, and user-friendly. Happy roasting!

Cafe + Coffee Shop Supplies

If you are looking for paper goods and other supplies for your coffee business, here are a couple of businesses that offer everything from cups to oat milk:

1. http://www.coffeeshopsolutions.com/
2. https://cupsworks.com/

Coffee Degassing, Inventory Levels + Roasting Scheduling For Your Coffee Business

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Following these best practices can mean the difference between success and struggle for your coffee roasting business.

Degassing Time For Your Roasted Coffee

Roasting on-site means that you will have incredibly fresh coffee. After you have roasted, we recommend bagging your coffee into one-way valve bags immediately and **allowing the freshly roasted coffee to degas for at least 3-7 days before serving.**

When you roast coffee, gases like carbon dioxide, form inside the bean. These gases escape from the freshly roasted coffee after roasting and interfere with the flavor and brewing. Don’t worry; carbon dioxide in your beans isn’t bad; it has a vital role in coffee quality, as an indicator of freshness.

While this can vary by roast level and bean, **we recommend 3-7 days of degassing time** before serving.

The best way to determine the ideal degassing period for each of your coffees will be to begin tasting the coffee daily after you roast it, starting 24 hours after roasting to find the window where the coffee tastes the best. If you’ve got wholesale partnerships, be sure to inform them of the ideal degassing window before brewing.

Roasted Coffee Inventory Levels & Roasting Scheduling

1. We recommend having at least 7 days' worth of roasted coffee on hand at all times.

This ensures that your business is stocked and can pivot quickly if you get a sudden rush, an unusually large customer order, or an emergency occurs. Also, establishing your ideal degassing period will help you determine how much coffee you need to roast and keep on hand.

2. Roast coffee for your business at least 2 times per week.

This ensures that you are roasting on a reliable schedule, your business is stocked and you have a buffer if you get a sudden rush, an unusually large customer order, or an emergency occurs.

Reminders & Best Practices

1. If you're just getting started with your on-hand inventory levels, also called "pars", you may need to commit extra roasting hours to build up the appropriate on-hand amount. Once you've done this, you'll be able to plan your roasting hours better to meet your inventory levels.
2. Remember to incorporate degassing time into your inventory planning.
3. Plan for busier seasons and new business lines. That's right; your inventory levels may need to shift by season and business line, so be prepared to reevaluate regularly.
4. You might also find that you're selling more coffee during the holiday season. Plan to shift your on-hand inventory levels based on last year's holiday data starting in late October or early November.
5. Remember shipping timelines! If your volume is consistent, regularly placing orders through **The Marketplace** is easy if you know how much coffee your business is going through!

Green and Roasted Coffee Storage

Source: Bellwether Coffee, https://help.bellwethercoffee.com/coffee-storage-full-bags. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

Having buckets, containers, or bins available can be incredibly beneficial depending on the space you have and the amount of roasting you do. This article provides storage recommendations for you as you build your roasting business.



Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co. Photo by Bryan Clifton

Coffee Storage Best Practices

Whether you are storing and blending green or roasted coffee, roasting many batches in one session, or want to cut down on your single-use coffee bags, having the right sized container available can make your coffee roasting operation a lot easier.

When it comes to green coffee storage, it is generally easier to manage. Grain-Pro bags, which often come with boxes and bags of green coffee, are ideal for storing green coffee. However, it is important to ensure that you store your green coffee in a cool, dry place that is free from cleaning products or fragrant foods. Green coffee is porous and can absorb odors from nearby materials, so it's crucial to keep it separate from roasted coffee to avoid any cross-contamination.

Green Coffee Storage + Containers

If you want to transfer your green coffee into a different container than the Grain-Pro bag it is often packaged in, it can be really convenient to have a platform with casters to help move them around. Here are a few suggestions for containers of various sizes:

- **Baytec 5 Gallon Food Safe Bucket 3 Pack $18**
- **Rubbermaid Brute 10 Gallon $22.82**
- **Rubbermaid Brute 20 Gallon with Lid & Dolly$56**
- **Rubbermaid Brute 44 Gallon $54**
- **Rubbermaid Brute 44 Gallon with Lid & Dolly $90**

Roasted Coffee Storage + Containers

For your roasted coffee, it's convenient to have buckets that you can easily label, stack, carry, and scoop from for bagging. Here are a few that we suggest:

- **Rubbermaid Brute 10 Gallon $22.82**
- **Cambro 5.5 Gallon Pail$15,(Lid For Pail $1)**
- **Baytec 5 Gallon Food Safe Bucket with Lids 3 pack $89**

To read more about roasted coffee packaging, check out our Roasted Coffee Packaging article.

Cold Brew + Cold Coffee

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Cold Brew is super popular and a great way to drive a high margin/high volume menu offering with minimal labor time/beverage served. This article will provide tips for brewing cold brew.

Copy of XO Espresso Miami Beach FL_Bellwether Roaster_3What tools do you recommend for Cold Brew?

We suggest using either the Filtron Pro, with the Coffee Sock reusable filters or The Toddy Cold Brewing System. Both of these systems can brew a large amount of concentrated coffee easily.

Here's a breakdown of equipment and cost for set up:
Prices current as of January 2024.

Cold Brew System	Price	Qty	Total
Commercial Toddy	100	1	100
5.5gal system	429.95	1	429.95
WC 6 gal system	370.95	1	370.95
Inline filtration	89.99	1	89.99
5 gal Ball Lock Keg	110.84	2	221.68
Nitrogen Tank	76.95	2	153.9
Ball Lock Liquid Disconnects	8.99	10	89.9
Ball Lock Gas Disconnects	8.99	10	89.9
Gas Hose (price/ft)	1.29	20	25.80

Beverage Line (25ft)	20.59	1	20.59

Cold Brew Recipe

1. Use a 1:4 Coffee to Water Ratio
2. Grind 2lbs of coffee (start with the consistency of coarse sand, or just a little coarser than a standard filter grind). We recommend a medium roasted coffee from Latin America.
3. Add 1 gallon of water.
4. Combine coffee and water in your toddy or cold brew maker and allow to steep in the refrigerator for 12-18 hours.
5. Strain off the resulting liquid and dilute 1:1 – 1:1.5 to make a basic cold brew. You can run this through an inline filter to remove any remaining sediment to make it easier to serve on draft.
6. You can also dilute the initial yield or concentrate with milk to make a draft latte.

Kegging Cold Coffee and Nitro Setup

Here is a video that has some really good info about setting up your Nitro Coffee setup:

How to Setup a Kegerator to Serve Nitro Coffee. As they mention, setting your nitro pressure gauge to about 30psi is recommended.

Additionally, the Keg Outlet has a lot of options and resources for your nitro coffee setup here: Keg Outlet Nitro Coffee. The 5-gallon kegs that we recommend for cold brew are the 5 Gallon Kegs orthese..

A couple of pieces of advice and suggestions:

- Once your coffee has been cold-brewed, it's beneficial to charge your cold brew keg from a larger nitro tank that you keep in your production or storage area. This will save you rapidly using up your smaller nitro tank that most people have near their kegerator to push the coffee through the lines for service.

- Nitrogen incorporates into coffee better when the cold brew coffee is cold.
- If you wanted to be more precise with your dilution ratio/concentration, a refractometer is a good tool to have.Here is one that we've heard good things about and is not as expensive as others.
- Check out this articleto learn more about cold brew and food safety.

Iced Filter Coffee/Japanese Style Iced Coffee Recipe:

1. Use 65g of coffee per Liter of water (or about 5 grams more than you would usually use)
2. Grind the coffee a little bit finer than you would grind for a usual cup of hot coffee.
3. You are going to brew with 40% of the weight of your water as ice and 60% with hot water.
   E.g., if using 500ml brew, you are going to use 200g of ice and 300ml of hot water (35g of coffee for that amount of water)
4. Rinse your paper filter over the sink to avoid heating the vessel you are brewing into.
5. Bloom the coffee with 2 to 3 times the weight of coffee as water, let it bloom for 45 seconds, and stir the bloom/slurry to ensure all the coffee is wet.
6. Pour the remaining hot water over the coffee and try and stretch out the brew time for at least 2-3mins
7. Once you have finished pouring the hot water over the coffee, give the coffee and water still drawing down a stir a couple of times.
8. Once the brewing is complete, swirl the vessel with your liquid coffee in it to get rid of any remaining pieces of ice.
9. Pour onto fresh ice cubes in a glass.
10. Enjoy!

Espresso Brewing Guidelines

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Espresso extraction has many variables and flavor and concentration preferences. This article provides dialing in tips and espresso basics.

211229_Bellwether_Unravel_2274Pointers for Espresso Extraction:

1. A good extraction starts with thick, dark brown streams dropping from the portafilter. The streams will become a light caramel color as the shot runs longer.

2. If you are not using a scale to measure your coffee ground and espresso beverage volume, (**ratio and weight recipes outlined below*) it's advised to stop the shot once the stream starts to become completely transparent and thin. At that point in the extraction, you may begin to dilute the shot and introduce an unbalancing volume of bitter and astringent compounds.

3. Generally speaking, unless you are pulling a very lightly roasted coffee, running the shot really long past a 1:2 coffee to liquid espresso ratio or far past a 35-second brew time can tend to dilute the shot. You also may extract too many bitter, dry/astringent compounds. Typically, an espresso shot that starts and ends in a 25-35 second timeframe will yield a balanced and sweet espresso.

**Please note that espresso extraction has many variables and flavor and concentration preferences. It's also worth mentioning that variables like water temperature, roast level, roast freshness, grind quality, and consistency can play a large part here. The above is an excellent starting point, though!*

Dialing In Process:

1. First, pull a test shot. Note the streams' progression, the weight of the dose, the brewed espresso weight, and the shot time.
2. Taste the shot to check for sweetness and balance if the desired liquid espresso weight is reached within your preferred ratio.
3. If the desired liquid espresso weight is reached too slowly, you might extract more bitter and dry compounds that can unbalance the shot and exhibit over-extracted characteristics. Taste the shot and see what you think. The first step is to grind coarser to decrease the surface area, lessen water restriction through the coffee bed, and speed up the shot.
4. If the desired liquid espresso weight is reached too quickly, your espresso might tend to be a little sour and exhibit under-extracted characteristics. Taste the shot and see what you think. The first step is to grind finer to increase the surface area and water restriction through the coffee bed to slow down the shot.
5. Continue to adjust grind until the shot falls roughly within the parameters above the coffee tastes delicious (sweet and balanced).

A short note on tamping:

A firm (referring to the downward force applied onto the coffee bed), level, and consistent tamp is advised.

**There is some research currently being conducted, by Dr. Samo Smrke, regarding the appropriate Kg of force one needs to apply to the coffee bed went tamping to ensure consistent espresso extraction. The preliminary research suggests that 6 kg of force is generally required to yield consistent extraction.

Sample Espresso Recipes:

1. **Ristretto: about a 1:1 coffee to beverage ratio**
    1. 18 – 20 grams of coffee
    2. 18 – 25 grams of liquid espresso

    3. 25 – 35 Seconds
2. **Normale: about a 1:2 coffee to beverage ratio**
    1. 18 – 20 grams of coffee
    2. 34 – 40 grams of liquid espresso
    3. 25 – 35 Seconds
3. **Lungo: about a 1:3 coffee to beverage ratio**
    1. 18 – 20 grams of coffee
    2. 40 + grams of liquid espresso
    3. 25 – 40 Seconds

Essential Items For Your Coffee Roasting Business

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Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

Once you've roasted your coffee, you'll want to make sure you've got all the supplies you need to run a successful operation. This article outlines the essential items for your roasting business.

Roasting is just the beginning of your coffee journey.

While your bagging and production supplies won't take up much space, you'll want to take stock of everything you need to get going and set up a small area for storage and production of your roasted coffee. We're making it easy to start by listing and linking some of our favorite products in coffee production.

Let's dive into what you need for coffee production!

Please note: any prices listed were the prices at the time this post was published and may change.

A Scale For Weighing Green Coffee

For weighing our green coffee in preparation for roasting, a scale with high weight capacity and a larger weighing platter or surface is ideal. Here are a few scales that are good for this:

- Detecto Scale 150lb Max $155
- Accuteck Heavy Duty Digital Scale $42.99
- Accuteck ShipPro Digital Scale $39.99

A Few Good Scoops

We suggest using separate scoops for your green and roasted coffee because it is best to avoid cross-contamination of green and roasted coffee beans. Green coffee dust can end up on roasted coffee, tainting the flavor. Either a metal or plastic scoop will work. It's nice to have a larger scoop for weighing out green coffee in preparation for roasting like these:

- Winco AS-58oz Aluminum Scoop $19.39
- CCK Scoop Aluminum 58oz $23

For bagging or weighing roasted coffee, it's a little easier to have a couple of smaller scoops handy like these:

- Winco AS-24oz Aluminum Scoop $12
- Update International 24oz Aluminum Scoop $12

A Scale For Weighing Your Roasted Coffee

Scales for weighing your roasted coffee for serving or filing your retail bags are relatively easy to find, and most of the scales listed above will do the trick. However, if you weigh out 5lbs bags of coffee for bulk or wholesale consumption, you might need something with a little more weighing capacity. Please note, making sure you are filling your bags with advertised weight on your packaging is required by law. Here are a few suggestions of scales that are suitable for weighing your roasted coffee:

- Accuteck ShipPro Digital Scale $39.99 (110lb weight limit / 2g or 0.1oz accuracy)
- Acacia Pearl $140-150(11lb weight limit / 0.003oz or 0.1g accuracy)
- Gator Coffee Scale $27(6.6lb weight limit / 0.003oz or 0.1g accuracy)

Buckets, Containers, and Bins for Green and Roasted Coffee

Depending on how much room you have and how much you're roasting, having buckets, containers, or bins around can be very helpful. Whether you are storing and blending green or roasted coffee, roasting a lot of batches in one session, or want to cut down on your single-use coffee bags, having the right size container available can make your coffee roasting operation a lot easier.

Green coffee storage can often be a little easier to organize. Boxes and bags of green often come in Grain-Pro bags, which are perfect for green coffee storage.

You will want to make sure you store your green coffee in a cool, dry place free from cleaning products or fragrant foods. Remember, green coffee is porous and can absorb smells from nearby materials. Also, be sure the green coffee is stored separately from the roasted coffee to avoid cross-contamination.

If you want to transfer your green coffee into a different container than the Grain-Pro bag it is often packaged in, here are a few suggestions:

- Rubbermaid Brute 10 Gallon $22.82
- Baytec 5 Gallon Food Safe Bucket 3 Pack $18
- Rubbermaid Brute 20 Gallon with Lid & Dolly$58

For your roasted coffee, it's convenient to have buckets that you can easily label, stack, carry, and scoop from for bagging. Here are a few that we suggest:

- Rubbermaid Brute 10 Gallon $22.82
- Cambro 5.5 Gallon Pail $15, (Lid For Pail $1)
- Baytec 5 Gallon Food Safe Bucket with Lids 3 pack $79

An Impulse Bag Sealer For Your Coffee Bags

When you start to bag your own coffee for retail, you will need a sealer to seal the bags. A tabletop hand-operated bag sealer works perfectly well.

If you require a sealer that can handle a little more volume and is a little faster, here are a few options:

- IMPAK Foot-Operated Impulse Sealers $225
- Metronic 12 Inch Impulse Sealer$62
- Sealer Sales WNS-200D Table Top Direct Heat Sealer$870

Finally, a few of our favorite partners.

We've worked with hundreds of vendors and partners over the years, and these top three are our go-to, life-long partners for coffee-related supplies and more!

PLC Print is our one-stop-shop for anything and everything marketing related. If you can imagine it, they can print it! Seriously, anything is possible with PLC. If you have a fun packaging/printing/marketing/anything idea, Rajiv and PLC can make it happen. This amazing shop is owned and operated by people of color in Berkeley, CA (across the street from our very first office/garage)!

Sticker Mule is a great source for **coffee labels**, especially if your menu changes often. Their lowest minimum order quantity is 50, but the bigger the order, the bigger the discount! We use StickerMule for most of our stickers and labels. We're proud to work with StickerMule, a company that wanted to make an industry better, which many said would be "impossible" to do... sound familiar? 😉

SavorBrands is the company that makes our Bellwether-branded coffee bags and a leader for coffee packaging in the industry. Savor Brands is dedicated to innovative packaging solutions for a more sustainable future for coffee, which is totally aligned with our values. We love the team at SavorBrands and are proud to call them a Bellwether partner.

How To Build A Coffee Menu For Your Roasting Business

Source: Bellwether Coffee, https://help.bellwethercoffee.com/how-to-build-a-coffee-shop-menu-bellwether-coffee. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

Choosing which coffees to feature on your menu can be daunting. Read on for top tips on how to optimize your offerings selection like a champ!



Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

Opening up a coffee shop is exhilarating. Between managing the build-out of your soon-to-be cafe space to hiring a team of dedicated baristas, there's a lot to accomplish before opening your doors.

In all the hustle, there's one key step that's often rushed right at the very end but deserves a more strategic approach: creating your coffee menu from scratch.

We've helped dozens of coffee startups develop a menu that not only meets the business's needs but keeps customers coming back for more. And, we've compiled our decades of specialty coffee experience into a solid, repeatable system you can use to plan your coffee shop menu.

By following our system, you'll learn:

- How to map out your coffee shop menu (+ the decisions you'll need to make along the way)
- Why defining concrete business goals is the key to a well-crafted menu
- Where to source the right coffees for your menu

By the end, you'll be prepared to create an enticing coffee menu for your new venture.

Step 1: Develop a Coffee Menu Map

From the outside, building a coffee menu seems simple. However, coming up with coffee shop menu ideas involves far more than picking a few drinks and pulling prices out of a hat.

Before diving into logistics and pricing, it's all about determining your beverage list and what you want your coffee drinks to taste like. Broadly, this map contains two main categories:

- **Beverage Choices** - Ask yourself: what coffee drinks do you want to offer? Will you keep a simple menu of drip coffee and espresso drinks? Will you live life on the edge with nitro cold brew and a pour-over bar? List out the exact drinks you'll be serving.
- **Coffee Flavors and Types** - Specialty coffee boasts immense natural flavors like sweet black cherries, tart apple, smooth caramel, and tree nuts. You can roast long for a rich and deep flavor, or opt for a lighter and brighter profile. As a business owner, you have control over what your drinks taste like via the coffees you select.

A successful coffee shop menu system begins by building a coffee menu map between these two components.

Let's dive in.

Also Read: Selling Wholesale Coffee to Grocery Stores

Start With a Detailed Beverage List

From tried and true drip coffee to classic espresso drinks, signature beverages to hand-crafted pour-over coffees, coffee menus are ever-evolving to meet the preferences of their customers.

When creating a menu from scratch, begin with the basics. There's no need to develop signature drinks or exquisite offerings from the get-go.

Start by writing down the standard drinks you'd like to offer. These will be the drinks you'll sell year-round and are the foundation of your menu.

Among the most common beverages are:

- **Batch brew.** Also known as drip coffee, this is the cornerstone of every coffee menu.
- **Espresso drinks**. Lattes, cappuccinos, and mochas all start with the basics: *quality espresso and expertly steamed milk.*
- **Pour over coffee**. Many coffee companies also sell a selection of hand-brewed coffees made with various brew methods
- **Decaf drinks**. Providing a range of decaf menu items ensures your menu appeals to a wider audience.
- **Cold coffee.** Some customers prefer to only drink cold coffee. From cold brew growlers to iced lattes, cold coffee drinks are a coffee menu staple, too.

Now that you know *what* you want to sell, it's time to dive into the fun part: **imagining what those drinks will taste like**.

Identify Flavor Expectations

Once you identify the drinks you plan to offer, it's time to pair them with the right coffees. The key is to identify your flavor expectations. Tackle this hurdle by answering the following questions:

- **What's your style: approachable, adventurous, or both?** The ethos and goals of your coffee startup will guide your coffee decisions. Do you want to offer mellow and approachable flavors that cater to all customers? Or, are you the coffee shop that offers experimental and rare flavors from coffee origins across the globe?
- **What *don't* you want to sell?** If you know that the local clientele prefers a medium-dark roast drip coffee, you don't have to offer a light roast option. The same goes for narrowing down your beverage list. You have full control over the menu boundaries you set for your shop.
- **What coffees/tastes *aren't* offered in your area?** Take a good look at your local competition. Is there an opportunity to introduce a new world of coffee flavors to residents? Analyze what the local coffee roasters and shops are offering as well as what they *aren't*.

Also Read: The Complete Guide to Setting Up Your Coffee E-commerce Store

Blends, Single Origins, Roast Level:*Which Works Best for My Menu?*

The final step in plotting your coffee menu map is determining if your company should offer *blends* or *single-origin coffees* (or both!) and at which *roast level*.

- **Single Origin Coffees** are a great way to explore the diverse world of coffee flavors, keep your menu fresh, and are enjoyed by both casual and more adventurous coffee lovers. They're often used on pour-over bars and as secondary espresso options. However, some specialty shops also choose to have a rotating single-origin coffee on their batch brew menu.
- **Coffee Blends** are ideal for consistent offerings that appeal to a more average customer, like your standard espresso or drip coffee. Most coffee customers appreciate the reliability of blends and will come back again and again for the same consistent, delicious flavors.

Each coffee has advantages and disadvantages:

When thinking this decision through, ask yourself:

- Do I want to offer a core, consistent blend year-round?
- Will my audience appreciate the seasonality of single-origin coffees?
- How much flavor diversity is important to offer at a time?
- Which coffees accommodate my intended drink line-up?

We recommend most roasters start with:

- A standard house blend for drip, your go-to “regular coffee”
- A blend exclusively for espresso
- Two or three rotating single-origin coffees
- One good decaf (single origin or blend)

And, after you’ve selected your company’s coffee blends and single-origin coffees, you have one last flavor decision to make: **roast level**.

Both blends and single-origin coffees are available as *light, medium, and dark roasts*.

- **Light roast coffee** is roasted to accentuate the natural flavors and characteristics of the bean. Light roast coffees can boast vibrant flavors, crisp acidity, and a tea-like to juicy mouthfeel. *Coffee shops looking to excite customers with a variety of flavors will fare well with at least one light roast menu option.*
- **Medium roast coffees** have a sweeter, more developed flavor profile thanks to the extended roasting time and caramelization process. These coffees also have a more mellow acidity but a creamier body. *Medium roasts are a great, approachable option for those looking to appeal to a wider audience.*
- **Dark roast coffee** boasts deep, hearty flavors like cedar and walnut. They’re often described as “bold” or “intense” due to their heavy mouthfeel and smoky aromas. *Coffees from Central/South America and Indonesia are delicious when roasted as a dark roast.*

When evaluating specific roast levels, always consider the purpose behind the coffee. For example, a light roast coffee from Kenya will taste outstanding as a pour-over, but may not shine in your espresso drinks. It’s often a matter of trial and error to identify which coffees work best with different brewing methods.

Also Read: Essential Items For Your Coffee Roasting Business

Generally speaking, any roast level can be used for any brew method. Here are some recommendations for brew methods and roast levels based on what has worked best for our customers:

Light roast coffees:

- Batch brew coffee
- Pour over bars
- Iced coffee (flash-brewed)
- Decaf coffee

Medium roast coffees:

- Espresso
- Batch brew coffee
- Cold brew
- Nitro cold brew
- Decaf coffee

Dark roast coffees:

- Batch brew
- Decaf coffee

Of course, there's no definitive science behind building a coffee menu. You'll need to sample several coffees and recipes to nail down exactly what you'll sell at your coffee shop.

Step 2: Define Your Business Goals

A coffee menu is more than a list of drinks. *It's a means to accomplish your business goals and objectives.*

As you piece together your coffee menu map, ask yourself: **"What are my real business goals?"**

For some business owners, these goals may look like:

- **“I want to sell rare, exclusive coffees.”** Businesses in areas with coffee adventure seekers might have an opportunity to triumph over the local competition by honing in on a rotating menu of high-quality single-origin coffees. Focus on building a menu that highlights these premier coffees with offerings such as a pour-over bar and single espresso shots.
- **“I want to drive repeat customers.**” If your business is located in a congested area with multiple competitors, building a loyal customer base and community will be the key to success. Concentrate your efforts on finding a consistent, repeatable-*and most importantly, delicious coffee* you can offer year-round.
- **“I want to wholesale my coffee in the future.”** As your business expands, you may think about pursuing wholesale opportunities as an additional revenue stream. With this in mind, keep a dutiful eye on the coffees your customers buy. Their preferences indicate what flavors and drinks the local market is fond of. In turn, this influences what coffees other coffee shops and grocery stores will purchase from you in the future.
- **“I want to offer a variety of signature drinks.**“Fun seasonal drinks are all the rage. Pumpkin spice lattes are many coffee lover’s go-to drinks in the fall. Brown sugar lattes are also on the rise. Consider what seasonal drinks are in as you start to create your coffee shop menu. Do you want to incorporate these popular drinks into your menu or branch out and try something new? From coffee cocktails to fancy espresso drinks, coffee shops can get creative with their signature drink menu. However, this requires using a coffee that you can rely on and also mixes well with each new signature drink recipe. To achieve this goal, match the seasonality of specific single-origin coffees with your rotating drink menu for the best results.

Without setting and acknowledging goals, your menu is simply a list of drinks. Your business objectives are the compass guiding your coffee menu map in the right direction.

Beyond Functional Goals, Identify Brand and Value Goals

Step away from the practical for a moment and get in touch with your deeper mission. There's a deeper reason you're building a coffee startup than just selling coffee - you want your beans to align with that mission and your values.

We suggest making a list of the value-oriented goals you have for your coffee. Many of our roasting partners have goals like...

- Environmentally-friendly agricultural processes
- Sourced so that the farmers are paid a Verified Living Income
- Full bean traceability from farm to cup

Our industry has long been an advocate for these values, but when it comes to practicing them via responsible sourcing, much of that talk has turned out to be lip service. Customers can see through it though, and brands whose ethics and products align not only perform well amongst competitors but make our industry a healthier and more responsible place.

Step 3: Follow the Path Toward Success

By pairing your drink ideas with your business needs, you'll discover the formula for creating the perfect coffee shop menu for your coffee company.

It may seem overwhelming, but if you take it step-by-step using this system, you'll find it's not as big of a challenge as you thought!

1. Pick a coffee beverage you want to sell
2. Think about the coffee flavors & characteristics this drink should have
3. Identify the business objectives it helps you achieve
4. Select a coffee bean that's aligned with your vision

Let's take a look at a few examples in action:

Scenario 1: Espresso

- **Drink**: Espresso
- **Desired Flavors/Characteristics:** Sweet and nutty, with a subtle fruit note to elevate all espresso-based beverages

- **Business Objective**: Retaining new customers to develop a loyal fan base

To keep customers coming back for more, the coffee used for your espresso drinks needs to provide a consistent flavor experience. *Opt for a medium-roast blend to suit these criteria and meet your goals.*

Scenario 2: Latte

- **Drink:** Latte
- **Desired Flavors/Characteristics:** Sweet flavors like chocolate, caramel, vanilla, hazelnut, or cinnamon
- **Business Objective:** Attracting and retaining customers with a popular hot or iced coffee drink

Lattes are one of the best-selling coffee shop menu items around the globe. A latte is created by combining espresso with steamed milk and milk foam. It can be made hot or cold. To help attract and retain customers, *a medium or dark roast coffee paired with sweet flavors will keep your latte-loving customers coming back for more.*

Scenario 3: Iced Coffee

- **Drink**: Iced Coffee
- **Desired Flavors/Characteristics**: Unexpected flavors like nutmeg, raspberry, hibiscus, or apple
- **Business Objective:** Attracting new customers with a seasonal iced drink

To entice new customers in mind, *a light-roast single-origin coffee brewed over ice will do the trick*. Experiment with coffees from different countries such as Ethiopia, Zambia, Colombia, or Costa Rica as well as different iced pour-over recipes to find the right flavors for your seasonal iced coffee.

Also Read: How To Launch Your Coffee Subscription

Heads Up, Your Coffee Menu Will Evolve

As a new business, you're not basing your coffee shop menu decisions on concrete sales data. Instead, you're taking intuitive actions with your target audience,

business goals, and coffee preferences in mind.

However, after you open your doors and spend a few months getting to know the ins and outs of your business, **your menu will evolve -** *and for several reasons.*

- **Customer preferences and expectations** will guide your menu as time goes on. Tailor your coffee offerings and beverages to meet the flavor preferences or expectations of your shop.
- **Coffee seasonality** plays a major role in the products a coffee company can sell. Planning your menu around coffee harvests is a great way to set clear expectations with staff and customers alike.
- **Market price changes** will also dictate what coffees are on your menu. If the price of a coffee from a specific region suddenly becomes out of your budget, you'll need to adjust your menu to accommodate this change while still maintaining flavors and consistency.

The important thing is to be flexible while simultaneously mindful of your sales figures.

Be ready to adjust your menu as you learn more about the type of drinks your customers want and what coffees work best for your drink recipes.

How to Find the Right Coffees for Your New Menu

After you've followed our step-by-step system to build out your ideal coffee shop menu, it's time to go out and find these coffees!

But, as a new coffee startup owner, do you have time to evaluate importers, cross-check your sustainability values, research coffee offerings, sample roast, and cup seemingly endless amounts of coffee? *Probably not.*

That's why you can rely on the Bellwether Green Coffee Marketplace to help you identify the best coffees for your menu, values, and business goals.

Our Green Coffee Marketplace is your coffee menu in a box. We've taken care of the sustainable sourcing (with receipts!), quality control, and traceability of top-tier

coffees from around the globe - all*you have to do is roast it!* Fortunately, the Bellwether Roaster makes roasting coffee in-house a breeze.

We've made sure everything you need for a successful coffee shop menu is right at your fingertips.

How To Launch Your Coffee Subscription

Source: Bellwether Coffee, https://help.bellwethercoffee.com/how-to-launch-your-coffee-subscription. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

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The subscription model is firmly cemented in the mainstream, and coffee roasters who launch their own in-house subscriptions—as opposed to leveraging a third-party marketplace—have a lot to gain.

Let's explore how you can build and launch an online coffee subscription for your roasting business.

We looked at new research and interviewed experts across the industry to put this guide together. In it, we'll cover things like:

- The 3 different types of subscriptions you can offer
- How to price your coffee and other operational challenges
- Creating a *Subscribe* page that customers love

But first, a quick look at the key benefits of launching your own subscription and why it's such a high-leverage sales channel for coffee shops and roasters.

The 4 Key Benefits of Launching a Coffee Subscription

Offering a subscription that you have complete control over creates a unique way to interact with both new and existing customers—and the upsides are no joke.

- **Create a new source of recurring revenue.** It's why we all love wholesale clients. Regular, reliable income lays a foundation for investment in other areas of the business.

- **Achieve a higher customer lifetime value.**Customers who subscribe experience little to no friction when it comes to that second (or fifteenth) purchase, since they're already invested. Subscribers are sticky, which increases their lifetime value over customers who have to make a conscious effort to purchase items one at a time.

- **Generate long-term loyalty with continuous customer engagement.**Subscribers are here for the long-haul, are more likely to open your email newsletters, and see your brand and products on a regular basis for months or years. These folks are your biggest advocates—and your biggest spenders.

- **Access new customer segments.** The subscription ecommerce market is expected to grow 65% annually for the next five years—that's a *lot* of customers and dollars being traded for repeat purchases. Not everyone wants to go through the labor of logging into your site every time they need a new bag. And there's no shortage of potential subscribers out there.

There's reason to get excited about adopting the subscription model, but it's going to take some careful logistical planning to get your operation ready for the opportunity.

How to Prepare Your Operation for An In-House Subscription

If you're looking to offer coffee subscriptions, we'll assume you're already selling coffee online via your own ecommerce store. If not, we suggest reading our guide to setting up your ecommerce store—that article walks through some ways you can prepare your operation for accepting online orders generally.

Pick Your Coffee Subscription Type

There are three main types of subscriptions you can offer a coffee roaster, each with its own operational challenges and upsides.

- **Monthly Roaster's Choice** (easy) — The simplest way to get started is to offer a "roasters choice" style subscription, where you hand-pick a specific bean to

be the coffee of the month. Customers who enjoy a white glove experience, and who trust your high quality standards, often gravitate toward this offering style. However, the average coffee lover will probably appreciate more personalization.

- **The Single Coffee Loyalist**(medium) — Giving customers the ability to subscribe to individual coffees on repeat is a great way to capture those regulars who love a specific bean. If you go this route, we suggest keeping things simple by only offering your year-round coffees at first—setting up new single origins each month can get a little exhausting.
- **Customer's Monthly Pick** (hard-ish) — Setting up a subscription where customers can log in and select their own bean each month can be burdensome to set up and is more hands-on over time, but it gives your subscribers the ultimate level of choice and will likely attract the strongest following.

The right choice for you primarily depends on two factors: (1) what your customers are going to appreciate the most, and (2) your tolerance for adding complication to your operation. Remember, you can always start simple and add complexity as you prove the model.

Determine Your Pricing Model

Perhaps the biggest draw to the subscription model for customers is that they receive a slight discount in exchange for their recurring loyalty. Especially in the coffee world, where people are buying multiple bags per month, a small amount of savings can add up over the long-haul.

We suggest offering a 10% discount (or so) to subscribers right out of the box. This is a healthy incentive for people who order irregularly to get on a more consistent subscription. It also answers the frequent customer question: ***"Why would I subscribe if I could just buy one bag at a time?"***

While discounted prices do cut into your margins, the difference is easily made up when customers stick around for more than two or three months. The exact price of

your subscription will be based on your green coffee and operating costs.

Generally, prices fall somewhere like this:

- **$15-17 Per Bag** — These are good daily drinking beans, like your house blend and other crowd favorites that have a mass appeal.
- **$18-21 Per Bag** — Your higher-scoring (and higher cost) beans need a price bump. Customers who pay at this level generally have higher standards.
- **$22+ Per Bag** — These well-paying customers are excited to experience your most nuanced and rare beans. They've probably been around the block a few times and get excited by interesting and unique coffees.

Establish Your Roasting and Shipping Schedule

You already have a roasting schedule for fulfilling regular ecommerce and wholesale orders, but you might need to tweak it to serve your subscription customers. It all comes down to what you promise subscribers.

Roasting and shipping to order is the most attractive option, because coffee lovers get the promise of uber-fresh coffee *and* fast shipping. However, this can create operational strain, because you end up with unpredictable amounts of coffee going out on a daily basis.

That's why many roasters in our network opt instead for **a weekly batch roasting and fulfillment schedule**. In this model, all orders for the week are held until a single day when they're all processed at the same time. Some customers might like having to wait a few days for their first order to ship out, but there are a few advantages to doing it this way:

- Only 4 potential subscription roasting days per month, instead of ~30
- Better inventory control and planning
- Easier to manage employees and labor

No matter how you fulfill orders, *communicate it clearly to customers*. Don't leave anyone guessing about roast days or shipping timelines.

Building the Subscription on Your Ecommerce Store

Now that you have a plan for what you offer, and how you offer it, it's time to get it all up on the website. Let's discuss the backend technology and the front-end user experience.

Layering on Subscription Technology

From a technology perspective, billing for subscriptions is a whole different beast compared to standard ecommerce orders because there are countless ways customers can subscribe (frequency, quantity, which coffee, etc). That's why many popular platforms—like Shopify and WooCommerce—don't offer subscription functionality right out of the box.

Here are the plugins that are most common among roasters in our network:

- **Shopify:** Bold or ReCharge
- **WooCommerce:** Woo Subscriptions

If you use Squarespace or Weebly, you have subscription billing built-in, but you might find it harder to create custom subscription options. Paid plugins like ReCharge tend to have more customization options, so make sure to cross-check your vision for what subscription type you'd like to offer against the features of your platform.

Creating a Subscribe Page That Generates Sales

Marketing 101: *A confused customer doesn't buy anything*. When you create your subscription page, it's important to think like your customer. What about a subscription excites them? What questions do they want answered before making a commitment? What concerns do they have about subscribing?

Here's what we suggest to ensure your Subscribe page converts well.

- **Explain*why*they should subscribe.** Tease the built-in discount on coffees. Explain how subscribers get first access to new or exclusive beans. Build hype about what it means to subscribe.

- **Get detailed about*how*they subscribe.** Paint the picture as clearly as possible of steps they need to take to subscribe; how to pick their coffee, frequency, and quantity; exactly when their first order will ship; how long till that first box arrives at their doorstep. Specifics are essential here, or you risk a flood of customer support emails.

- **Hype the specific coffees.**If customers can choose specific coffees, don't just list their names from a drop-down menu. Make sure customers can see how they're different (origin + tasting notes at the very least). If you're doing more of a Roaster's Choice subscription, show what last month's coffee was. You want to help customers imagine and get excited about what they'll be receiving soon.

- **Answer those FAQs.** Keep it simple with an FAQ section that asks the common questions explicitly at the bottom of the page, *even if you've already answered questions somewhere else on the page.*

- **Use your best coffee photography.** Coffee is all about the senses, so make sure you're creating mouthwatering anticipation with incredible photography. We're coffee people... this one should be a breeze.

Before your page goes live, run a handful of tests with various credit cards, subscription options, and addresses. You want to be 100% certain everything is set up correctly before your raving fans arrive on the page.

Finally, Nail the Unboxing Experience

A coffee subscription is a *commitment*. These customers aren't regular folks passing by your coffee shop whimsically—they've signaled that they're dedicated to your brand and coffees. Now it's time to remind them why.

Don't just plop a bag of coffee in a plain mailer and call it a day. Anyone can do that.

Create an unboxing experience that's unique to your brand.

Include a kind note thanking them for subscribing. Slide a postcard of coffee details in the box that explains why you chose this month's coffee (Roaster's Choice) or

reminds customers why they picked a certain bean. Offer a small discount on a piece of gear or swag as a gesture of goodwill. Send a branded sticker they can attach to a laptop or bag.

When you go the extra mile to make customers feel special, they tend to stick around longer.

Launch Your Coffee Subscription in 3 Steps

There's a lot to do here, but it all boils down to three core steps:

- Set your model and pricing
- Create a roasting and fulfilment schedule
- Update your site with the new subscription functionality

Naturally, you also need to be roasting exceptional coffee!

How to Start a Profitable Roasting Business

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Is Coffee Roasting Profitable? How to Start a Coffee Roasting Business and Make a Profit

Along the journey of opening and growing a coffee shop, every owner wonders at some point, “Should we roast our own coffee?” Making the transition takes passion, patience, and skill-but before anything else, it has to make financial sense: *is coffee roasting profitable?*

Let’s explore the research and break down coffee roasting profit margins vs coffee shop margins, dive deep into the financials, and analyze whether starting to roast coffee is a good move for you.

In this exploration, we’ll take a look at:

- Research on average profit margins for roasters vs cafes
- What to expect for startup costs (+ how to save big in the beginning)
- Reasonable expectations for coffee roasting ROI
- How to start a coffee roasting business

Let’s get into the numbers.

A Breakdown of Coffee Roasting Profit Margins

Let’s cut to the chase: there’s good research that demonstrates that **coffee roasters are more profitable than coffee shops, on average.**

The 2017 Specialty Coffee Association financial benchmark for roasters and cafes- the largest study of its kind-gave the North American industry much-needed clarity into key financial averages. Here's what the study found:

We'll dive deeper into the numbers, like average startup and green coffee costs, but let's review a few initial takeaways first.

- Coffee retailers (shops and cafes) have a solid average gross margin on each item sold (54%), but the added expenses of operating a retail location make it the least profitable business model of the bunch (6.86% profit).
- Roaster retailers roast and serve their own brand of coffee, naturally giving them the highest gross margin on each item sold (65%) and a relatively high profit margin (8.79%).
- Wholesale-focused roasters have the lowest gross margin (44%), but they also experience significantly higher sales ($750,000 annual) due to large, frequent, and long-term customer relationships.
- At the end of the day, roasters who offer *both* wholesale and retail locations fared the best when it comes to business profit margins-by a wide margin-at 11.92%.

These findings confirm the intuition of most coffee business owners, and are probably not too surprising. **For the coffee shop that wants to keep growing, starting to roast coffee is a natural next step.**

That's what Jordan Thompson of Retrograde Coffee in Nashville, TN told us when we asked why his shop started looking at adding a roasting operation:

"When we opened, we were getting feedback that other shops started seeing things turn around when they started roasting. We were hearing over and over again: "the only way to be profitable remotely quickly in this business is to roast coffee."

Retrograde went on to start roasting in-house in early 2020-just in time to sell retail bags to customers stuck at home during the pandemic.

Averages aren't the full picture, however, and the decision to start roasting needs to involve a more nuanced look at initial costs, years to return on investment, and an honest look at how you see yourself investing in this new revenue model.

Startup Costs: How Much Does a Coffee Roaster Cost?

The profit margins of roasting in-house might look good on the surface, but it's the initial startup cost that keeps most coffee shop owners from starting down the roasting path. The SCA study revealed that the average startup capital required to open a Roaster Wholesaler & Retailer operation was $120,000.

The largest expense, of course, is the commercial coffee roaster itself. **Commercial roasters range anywhere from $20,000 to $150,000**. Plus there's the costs of installing ventilation, attaching an afterburner to comply with local regulation, packaging equipment, and warehouse space-often adding another few thousand to the bill.

This up-front capital is *the* major inhibitor to coffee shops building out coffee roasting operations.

Training, Waste, and Hidden Costs of Roasting

Beyond the roaster and setup itself, there are additional costs that need to be taken into consideration. One of the biggest ones is *training and education*.

Back to Jordan from Retrograde:

When a company starts roasting on a traditional gas roaster, you're not really going to be stoked about that coffee quality for at least six months.

Retrograde was selling beans from Onyx Coffee Lab, the most awarded roaster in the United States. **They knew that if they started building the skill to roast from scratch, it would take months-if not years-to catch-up to Onyx's quality.** They couldn't afford to pay a team to figure out how to roast at a high level in the in-between time of taking out the loan and beginning to sell bags of coffee.

Another hidden cost of launching a roasting operation is the *initial waste*. During the training and education period, new roasters toss thousands of pounds of roasted coffee away due to the trial and error required to learn the skill. And the cost of those unsold beans adds up.

That was the biggest hang-up, the expense, the waste, and… how long was it going to take before we could have something that could compare to Onyx? It was going to be noticeable if our coffee went downhill.

Despite enjoying higher margins, commercial coffee roasters often find themselves in additional layers of debt due to these high startup costs.

Coffee: How Much Do Green Coffee Beans Cost?

According to our community of shops and roasters, wholesale coffee tends to cost between $9 and $14 per pound of beans. For roaster suppliers with high levels of brand awareness and exceptional quality, costs can go as high as $15 per pound.

In the specialty coffee industry, green (unroasted) coffee sells for $3.75 to $6.00 per pound. It's possible to pay less, but if flavor quality and consistency are important to you, we don't recommend it.

"For Onyx we were paying $9.50 to $15 per pound. When they saw the cost of green coffee, our owners were mind blown, like 'Wait. We could have been paying $4 per pound this whole time?"

For the team at Retrograde, this dramatic drop in *Cost of Goods Sold* (COGS) meant significant savings on coffee beans. Naturally, this level of savings is one of the benefits of roasting that's most compelling to cafes paying $10 or more per pound of coffee.

How to Price Roasted Coffee Beans

When you've installed your roaster, received training, and are finally ready to start selling coffee to customers, it's time to set your pricing. Here are two pricing examples based on typical wholesale and retail cost structures.

Cost Breakdown: Wholesale Coffee per Pound

Wholesale margins are lower, because you're giving customers a price break in exchange for higher volume orders. So despite lower margins over COGS compared to retailers, wholesale roasters generated far more in total revenue according to the SCA study.

Cost Breakdown: Retail Coffee per 12 oz Bag

Specialty coffee bags retails anywhere between $15 and $24. Most roasters opt for smaller 12-ounce bags to account for "shrinkage", or the natural loss of weight in beans during the roasting process, per pound of beans.

Traditional vs Bellwether Roasters: A Profitability Comparison

So far, we've explored margins and startup costs related to *traditional gas roasters.* These are the classic industrial machines we all know and love. As we've discussed, **getting started with a traditional roaster requires significant up-front investment**-and it's this major investment that keeps so many coffee shops from taking the next step.

This is one of the barriers to growth that we wanted to tear down with the Bellwether roaster, the most simple and affordable commercial roaster on the market. Here's how we do things differently:

- **All electric, no gas.** The Bellwether coffee roasting machine plugs directly into a standard outlet. No gas line installation means you can put it anywhere (no extra warehouse space needed!).
- **No ventilation required.** You can start roasting without installing ventilation and an afterburner, or waiting on permits from local health departments.
- **Create revenue *before* you train.** Coffees sourced in the Green Coffee Marketplace come with roast profiles created by our in-house industry veterans that you can download and use right out of the box. Rather than needings months of training and waste, you can start selling high-quality coffee immediately, then learn to develop your own roast curves over time (while you're already generating revenue).

- **Risk-free green buying.** Don't spend months figuring out how to even evaluate and purchase unroasted beans. Our green coffee team has decades of experience sourcing quality beans from reputable farm partners. Each coffee includes transparent reporting, quality assurance, and marketing materials.

We've meticulously designed a roaster and sourcing experience that's so fast and affordable, that **our average customer saves 30% on coffee costs right away.**

Let's break down the costs of roasting on a Bellwether vs buying wholesale beans to demonstrate how our roaster flips the script on whether you need major capital investment to make roasting financially viable.

For the team at Retrograde Coffee, the ability to skip the training, lease a roaster, and avoid months of costly trial and error before they ever sold a single bag meant they were able to launch a roasting program years before they would have been able to afford with a traditional roaster.

There's no way with the state we were in that we could have gone and just purchased a roaster. The Bellwether really makes that dream of roasting possible a lot sooner.

You can learn more about Bellwether's affordable pricing model here.

The Verdict: Is Coffee Roasting Profitable?

When you look at all the numbers, on average, **roasting coffee is profitable and a good avenue for business growth for coffee shops**. The major hangup is the *starting cost*, which tends to be $100,000 or more according to the SCA research.

How to Start a Coffee Roasting Business

Now that you know what to expect when it comes to startup and ongoing costs, as well as how much profit you can make as a coffee roaster, let's look into which steps you should take for starting your coffee roasting business.

Create a Business Plan

One of the first steps you should take when considering being a business owner is to create a business plan. You'll need to determine how much money you'll need and how much money you're willing to invest. Take note of the items you'll need to start your business, including roasting equipment, business location, green coffee, and packaging. Then factor in any regulatory and licensing fees you'll be required to pay.

Other things to consider as you create your business plan include researching your ongoing business costs, figuring out how much you can charge your customers, and naming your coffee roasting business. Once you've settled on a business name, you should establish a legal business entity such as an LLC or corporation. This protects you from being personally held liable if your coffee roasting business is sued.

Define Your Coffee Roaster Brand and Target Audience

Your brand is more than just roasted coffee. It's what your coffee roasting company stands for and how it's perceived by the public. A strong brand will allow your business to stand out against competitors. Consider your target audience as you start to define your brand and create your logo and other business materials.

Is your ideal customer a coffee shop? A grocery store? Will you sell directly to customers? Research your competition to learn more about what they are offering to their customers and offer an alternative solution. For example, if a majority of your competitors are offering light coffee, your coffee roasting business should consider offering something rich.

Prepare to Launch Your Coffee Roasting Business

Once you've created your business plan and defined your brand and target audience, it's time to prepare to launch your coffee roasting business. While these aren't the most exciting tasks, they are essential when starting a business. First, you'll need to register for state and federal taxes prior to opening your business. To do this, you'll need to apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN). Not only is

this easy, it's free. Keep in mind that you may have different options for how your roasting business will be taxed, depending on which business structure you choose

Next, you'll want to obtain any necessary permits and/or licenses. Failure to do so can result in fines or even lead to your business being shut down. Be sure to look into your state and local requirements to see which permits and licenses are required.

You'll then want to get business insurance. This protects your coffee roasting company's financial wellbeing in the event of a covered loss. There are several types of insurance policies created for different types of businesses with different risks, so it's important to read through and understand the coverage options. If your roasting business will have employees, you'll need to look into workers' compensation service as well.

Lastly, you'll want to set up accounting and open a business bank account and credit card. This is essential for personal asset protection and makes filing for taxes easier. From here, you can work on establishing your business credit to open net-30 accounts.

Market Your Roasting Business

Your brand story is what connects your coffee roasting business with your customers. You'll want to create a website as well as social media accounts for your business right away. This will help tell your brand's story and build brand awareness.

One of the easiest ways to market and promote your coffee roasting business is by offering coffee tastings, or cuppings. This gives potential customers the opportunity to connect with you, learn more about your coffee, and try your roasted coffee.

To help stand apart from other roasters in the coffee industry, consider specializing in a certain coffee from a particular region or a certain roast level. You may also want to look into getting Fair Trade Certified, Organic Certified, or Rainforest Alliance Certified coffee.

Consider your coffee bag packaging and design as marketing materials as well. Putting the roast date on your coffee bags shows your customers that the coffee beans inside have been recently roasted, ensuring quality freshness.

Marketing

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If you need assistance in creating a well-structured marketing plan, efficiently organizing your tasks, or generating innovative ideas for your roasting business, we have compiled a list of our favorite marketing tools to help you achieve your goals.

DSC02465-opHubspot

One of our highly recommended resources is Hubspot, which offers an extensive library of free marketing materials. Whether you are seeking guidance on developing a comprehensive marketing strategy or looking for tips to improve your campaigns, Hubspot provides valuable insights and resources.

Instagram and Facebook

When it comes to social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram have established themselves as the top choices for businesses. These platforms offer a wide range of features and tools to help you effectively engage with your target audience and promote your roasting business.

Hootsuite

If you are looking for a convenient way to schedule your social media posts across various platforms, Hootsuite is an excellent tool to consider. With its user-friendly interface and comprehensive scheduling capabilities, Hootsuite allows you to plan and automate your social media content, saving you time and effort. Be sure to check out their free plan!

Canva

To ensure your social media posts are visually appealing and professional, Canva is a valuable tool to have in your marketing arsenal. This graphic design platform offers a wide selection of customizable templates and easy-to-use editing tools, enabling you to create eye-catching visuals that align with your brand.

Grammarly

Maintaining high-quality writing is crucial for leaving a positive impression on your audience. Grammarly is a reliable tool that helps you eliminate grammatical errors, enhance clarity, and improve the overall quality of your writing. It provides real-time suggestions and feedback to ensure your content is error-free and polished.

Mailchimp

When it comes to email marketing, Mailchimp is widely regarded as one of the most popular and effective tools available. With its user-friendly interface, robust features, and customizable templates, Mailchimp simplifies the process of creating and sending marketing emails, allowing you to reach your target audience effectively.

Bellwether Customer Marketing Kit

In addition to these valuable marketing tools, you can also utilize our Marketing Kit, which provides approved Bellwether collateral. This kit includes a range of marketing materials and resources to support your marketing efforts, ensuring consistency and professionalism in your campaigns.

Marketing + Community

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Engaging your community and marketing your business using three steps: Lead. Shift. Act.

Yes, we're living in uncertain times. And, **there's a lot you can do right now** to keep your business afloat. We're here to help give you some ideas for engaging your community and marketing your business online.

Lead

You are the captain of your ship. Giving your team a sense of safety and community is important. Create an action plan that keeps them in the loop, and make sure your plan is flexible as rules and expectations are quickly changing. We'd recommend having a weekly team meeting. Use this virtual time together to share updates on business operations and address any questions or concerns from the team.

If you're able to delegate some social media tasks to your employees, considering giving them access to your company's social media accounts. They can use social media as a platform to talk about topics like home brewing, products you're selling online, and take-out or delivery offerings.

Shift

Shifting gears can be hard, and staying nimble and flexible is key. Think of ways you can innovate quickly in an ever-changing environment, and stay up-to-date on local rules and regulations.

First, take an introspective look by shutting out the noise for a few minutes. Remind yourself of your core values, the reasons you began your business, and the guiding principles and standards that make up your professional mission. **Use this vision to guide you moving forward.** If you ever get stuck, take a moment: take a deep breath, make sure to have compassion for yourself, give yourself time to think, and reflect on why you took on the brave task of starting your business. You got this.

Consider selling roasted coffee online. Keep options like take-out, curbside pick-up, and delivery operations running if you can.

Create interesting and engaging social media content and use social media as a place to update your community on your current offerings. If you partner with a local business, ask if they are able to sell your coffee. We've seen restaurants selling take-home meal kits adding a bag of roasted coffee. Think about partnering with local grocery stores, restaurants, or online businesses you may be able to work with.

Listen to your audience. Your customers *want* to support you and they might have some interesting ideas. Be sure to read your emails and comments on social media from your followers—they often provide a thoughtful perspective you may not have considered yet. Allow them to inspire you and be part of your solutions. Bringing your customers and followers along for your journey creates brand loyalty, trust, and connection.

Act

Sit down, make a list of 5 things you can do today, and do them. If you need help getting those things done, get on the horn (or email). See if you can leverage help from your community. This means delegating where you can! If it's hard for you to ask for help, don't worry, this is the time to do it.

Your network and team may be able to do things like take photos for your web store and social media channels, or write content to help with marketing. If you've got an online business, be sure you're stocked with labels, printer ink, and mailers. Make a communications plan, including social media posts, emails, e-newsletters,

and updating your website. Having a cohesive plan with lists of tasks will keep you—and anyone who is helping you—on track and committed to the bigger picture.

Marketing toolkit:

If you need help with your plan, organizing tasks, or brainstorming new ideas, here are some of our favorite marketing tools:

- Hubspot has an incredible library of free marketing resources.
- Facebook and Instagram are the top two social media platforms for businesses.
- Hootsuite helps you schedule posts to all of your social media channels (check out their free plan).
- If you need help with your social media posts, Canva is a great tool to use.
- Grammarly helps you with mistake-free writing that makes the right impression.
- Mailchimp is the most popular tool to use for sending marketing emails.
- Miro is an awesome digital whiteboard to use for your team meetings.

By diversifying your business offerings now, you're setting yourself up to survive this uncertain time and have a more robust business in the future and generating a plan for longer-term success. Remember, you got this.

Marketplace Payment Options

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Bellwether's Green Coffee Marketplace makes it more convenient, more accessible, and more equitable for farmers and retailers alike.

1. Debit or Credit

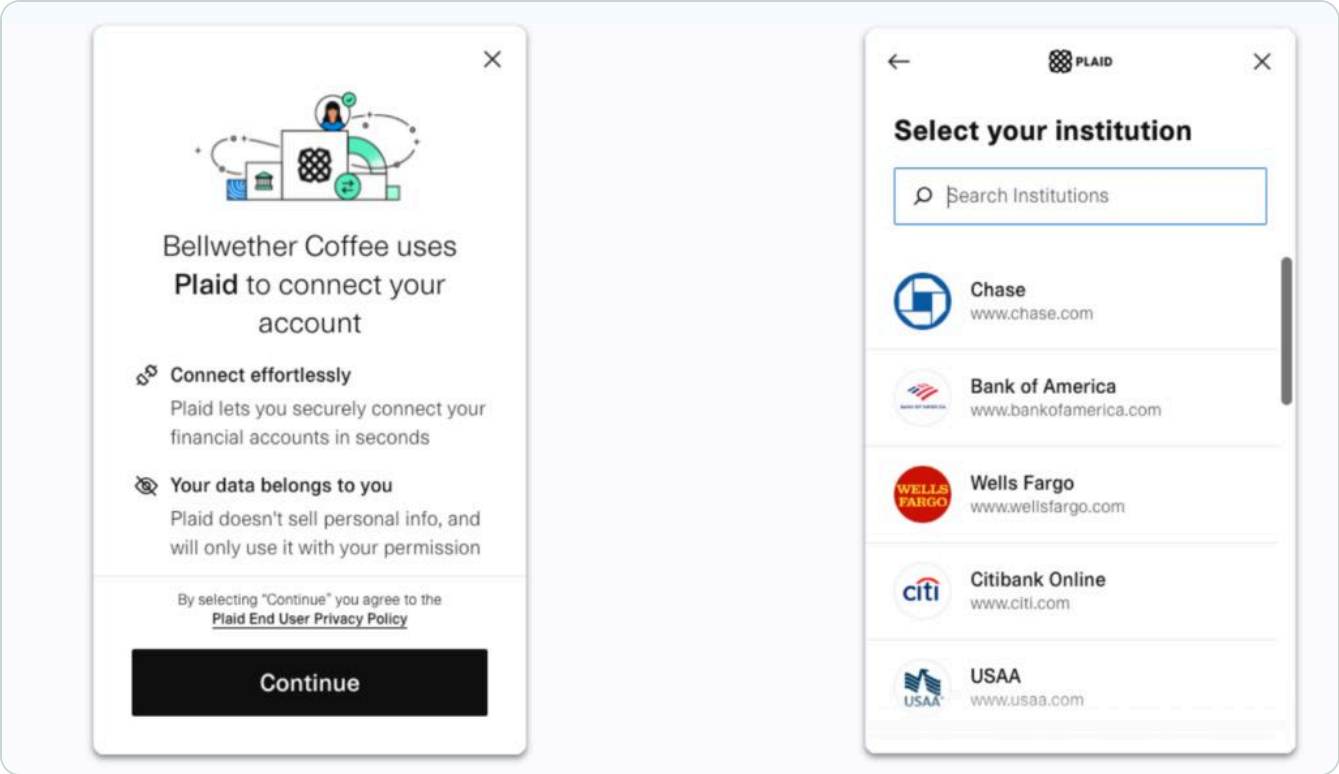
2. Buy Now, Pay Later Our partnership with Credit Key offers instant credit up to $50,000 for 12 months with 0% interest for 30 days. Credit Key is easily accessible during the checkout process.



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3. Instant Bank Connectivity

We support instant ACH connections to customer bank accounts via Plaid. Plaid is a secure tool trusted by thousands of businesses to securely connect banking information to retailers for quicker, more convenient transactions.



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Online Business/E-commerce

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E-commerce presents a great opportunity for you to take your business to new heights. Whether take-out, delivery services, or by selling bags of coffee online, this article provides tips to get you selling coffee online right away!

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Getting Online

First things first: set up your online business if you have not done so already.

If you've already got a website for your business, you're halfway there. Many businesses use sites like Wix or Squarespace as an easy website builder. Neither of those requires you to know anything about writing code! You simply choose a template and update it to match your brand. Once your website is up and running, you'll want to think about how to accept sales. First, check with your website provider to understand if there are built-in eCommerce tools, plugins, or compatible apps to choose from.

We've compiled a list of tools and resources below to help you to get your online coffee business up and running quickly. Here are some common solutions:

Square:

There's a good chance you might already use Square in your retail shop. If that's the case, it's fast and simple to use Square to set up an online shop. You'll also have several pricing options to choose from so you can pick the plan that works best for

you. As you grow and scale, you can always choose a different pricing plan. Click here and here for more information or to get started.

Shopify:

If you're an online shopper, you've likely already heard of Shopify—another popular eCommerce platform. Shopify offers pricing for businesses of all sizes. It's also compatible with many primary website builders such as Wix, Squarespace, Weebly, and WordPress. Learn more here.

Other things to keep in mind...

If you're already using **Squarespace** as your website, be sure to check out their menu of extensions to see if some of their offerings are a good fit for your online business. They also have loads of preset eCommerce templates here.

If you've got a **WordPress** site, you might want to research WooCommerce's extension store for à la carte app plugins if you're looking for more advanced additions like offering coffee subscriptions or gifting options for your online store.

Once your online store is ready to go, you can begin accepting orders from your customers! But before you get started, check out our information on shipping and logistics below to make sure you've got everything you need.

Shipping + Logistics

Once you've got your web store ready to go live, you've got to think about packaging your items and shipping them out to your customers. We want to make sure you've got everything you need to quickly go from sale to ship!

Determine Your Shipping Platform

There are many options when it comes to selecting a shipping platform. Be sure to consider cost and volume when determining what's best for you, as well as evaluating your existing online shop and website to make sure everything is compatible. Here are a few options worth checking out:

- ShipStation
- Shippo
- AfterShip
- Easyship
- Endicia

Once you've decided on a shipping platform, you'll want to be sure you've got everything you need to send out your packages. You might already have some of these things, but here's a quick checklist:

Coffee Retail Bags

After you've roasted your beans, you'll need to package them. We like bags from Sav-On Bags as a good general option. If you prefer compostable bags, we'd recommend giving Pacific Bag a try. Here are a few others we like working with:

- Roastar
- PBFY

Bag Labels

Bag labels are nice-to-have, but not required. Down the road, you might consider investing in custom bag labels to highlight your brand and showcase the coffee you're selling. Be sure to order labels for your bags that feature your logo and any key information about the coffee (tasting notes, roast date, roast level, etc.). Here are some of our favorite label options:

- Vista Print
- Moo
- SmartPress

To prepare for shipping, you'll want to be sure you have mailers on hand. Uline is well-known for its shipping and logistics products, as well as the ability to ship items quickly. Check out their selection of mailers here.

All set!

You’re ready to go!

Bags of Coffee

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Bagged coffee (132-154lbs) is a fantastic option for stocking your business and bags typically have a lower price per pound compared to boxes. This article explains how the delivery and storage recommendations for bags of green coffee.

Green Coffee 6

Bagged coffee is a fantastic option for stocking your business. However, there are a few drawbacks to consider. Bags of coffee tend to be heavy, can easily tip over, and can be challenging to move.

Here are a few things to consider when you order bags of coffee and some tips to ensure the arrival, offload, and storage of your bag order goes smoothly.

Prepare the appropriate space for the bags of coffee.

Boxes and bags of green often come in Grain-Pro bags, which are perfect for green coffee storage. You will want to make sure you store your green coffee in a clean, cool, dry place. Remember, green coffee is porous and can absorb smells from nearby materials. Also, be sure the green coffee is stored separately from the roasted coffee to avoid cross-contamination.

Get a plan together for storage and access.

Are you keeping the coffee on the pallet on which it was shipped? Are you emptying the bag into a Brute Bucket? Are you going to move the bags from the shipping pallet to your own pallets? Whichever you do, **please bring a buddy with you to help you lift!**

Bring a buddy with you! Team lifts are essential in moving bags of coffee.

Bags of coffee are heavy. Bags of coffee are roughly 28 inches wide x 40 inches tall and weigh between 132 and 154 lbs. They cannot be safely lifted by one person.

Here's a play by play of how we suggest you move your bags:

a) Each team member will stand at one end of the coffee bag, crouch down, and grasp two corners.
b) Lift the bag by straightening your knees, not your back.
c) Move the bag to a brute bucket or another pallet or rack. Please make sure the rack or pallet can safely accommodate the weight.

Pivot your Coffee Menu from Wholesale to Roasted In-House

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This article is a guide to make the transition from purchasing wholesale to roasting in house seamless.

Getting away from buying coffee from another roaster, and instead choosing to roast in-house, is a badge of honor for many in the coffee industry. Taking ownership of the quality and experience, creating your unique coffee menu, building a stronger brand—it's a natural next step for many coffee shops looking to continue growing their business.

In this journey from shop to roaster, there's one process that leaves many stumped: *the smoothest way to transition your existing coffee menu to a self-selected menu.*

We're distilling decades of roasting experience in this guide so you can rebuild a menu that works for your business as you transition from a wholesale buyer to roaster.

In it, you'll learn:

- How to evaluate your current coffee menu
- The system for piecing together your new coffee menu
- Why you should look ahead 1-2 years at how your business will evolve

Let's make this transition as smooth as possible.

First, Map Your Current Menu, Brew Methods, and Customers

Whether you've been in business for one year or ten, the very first step in building your new coffee menu is to carefully consider your current one. You've built up experience, a stronger vision for your business, and a loyal customer base—let's leverage it all.

There are three things to review.

Take Stock of Your Recent Coffees

Make a master list of all the coffees you've purchased from your wholesale roaster over the last twelve months. We suggest including the following data in your list/spreadsheet:

- Origin
- Blend vs Single Origin
- Flavor Notes
- Roast Level
- Your Rating (1-5 scale)

If you've been in charge of purchasing, you can already intuit what the trends are in what kinds of beans you order, but making a detailed list like this lays it all out there objectively. Set this list aside—we'll be back to it in a moment.

Make a List of the Ways Your Customers Experience Coffee

Next, make a list of the ways you serve coffee. Don't just write down brew methods, but rather the *experience* of those brew methods. For example, you may serve coffee in a Chemex and a Hario V60, but if they're both featured on your pour over bar, write it down as one type of experience.

Your list might look like this:

- Espresso
- Single origin espresso
- Decaf espresso
- Batch brew

- Decaf batch brew
- Pour over bar
- Cold brew
- Tableside french press

Now that you have a list of coffee experiences you provide to customers, you'll be able to match up new coffees to meet the needs of customers who choose those experiences.

Get Honest with Customer Expectations

The difference between barista preferences and customer preferences in specialty coffee is well-documented. Professionals who know their way around coffee tend to gravitate toward more unique or interesting coffees.

Your customers, however, likely don't have the same palette and preferences as your team, so before you start sourcing coffees, it's time to sync up.

Here are a few ways you can realign with your customer expectations:

- **Look at sales reports in your POS.** Sales data doesn't lie. From here you can quickly see which brew methods and experiences are most popular among your customers. It shouldn't be hard to identify your bread-and-butter brew methods—you'll probably want to closely replicate those when you start roasting in-house.
- **Review wholesale order volume from the last 12 months.** Compare the sales volumes of different beans and notice what origins, flavors, and roast profiles you sell the most of.
- **See what your baristas have to say.**If customers are often requesting certain coffees or brewing methods, or adding things to their coffee like milk or syrups, your baristas will be the ones to know about it. Check in with your team to see what insights they have from day-to-day interactions.
- **Survey your customers.** Your existing sales data shows what customers buy *now*, but it doesn't give you any insight into what they might

buy *tomorrow* if given the chance. There might be opportunities to offer coffees or brewing experiences that aren't currently on the menu.

It can be tempting to put on the coffee professional glasses when you're looking at this data and misinterpret where your customers are coming from. If you feel you're struggling to interpret the research objectively, run it by a second pair of eyes. The better you can understand the preferences of your customers, the better you can serve them when you start building your menu.

Second, Look Forward with Business Objectives

The final input of the coffee menu transition process is your own vision.

Where do you want to take your business next?

Clearly you want to start roasting—that's great! But how else do you see your business evolving in the coming years? Let's bring these goals into the equation. Here are a few examples of what they might look like:

- *"I want to have a wider customer appeal."*— If you're running on a small menu with only a handful of coffee experiences, broadening your menu might help you attract new types of customers. This indicates you should not only look to replace your existing coffees, but also add new beans that will work well with new menu items.

- *"I'm opening a new up-market location."*— If you're looking for ways to appeal to a more discerning crowd, you'll likely need to add a brewing experience or two, and that means you might want to add new types of coffees to complement them.

- *"I want to start selling to grocery stores."* — Selling wholesale to grocery stores can be a great way to expand your reach and sales volume, but not all coffees are a great fit. Here's a look at how wholesale pricing and margins can impact which coffees you sell via the grocery channel.

- *"I want my coffee to taste better and fresher."* — If you're aiming to upgrade your flavor quality, that's great! Make sure you work with your sourcing partner to

not only replace your current coffees, but raise the flavor bar too.

- *"I want to experiment with offering nitro cold brew."*— Looking to add a specific brew method or experience to your menu? Jot that down so you can make sure you find a good-fit coffee for it.

What else is on the horizon? What ideas are brewing in your head. Dream a little, then make sure to write it down.

Third, Put It All Together to Build Your Coffee Menu

You're intimate with your current lineup of coffees, what sells well and what doesn't, and how you and your customers want the business to evolve. The path to your new menu is drawn, now you just have to follow it.

Here's how it works:

- Start with a coffee experience you offer (or want to offer)
- Overlay what customers want and data about what sells
- Align your business vision
- Select a coffee that matches the criteria

Start with a top-selling menu item—for example, batch brew. Let's say most days you serve a *medium-dark blend* of beans from *Mexico* and *Ethiopia*, and most customers don't seem to add milk or sugar. In the future, you're also exploring getting your coffee into grocery stores.

Here's what you can learn from this:

- Your current batch brew offering sells well and appears to be loved by customers
- It's a medium-dark blend, which will probably also appeal to grocery store buyers
- *Therefore,* you can reasonably assume that if you source a blend that's close to your existing blend, customers will still love it *and* you'll be equipped for grocery expansion

As you dig into less mass-appeal coffee offerings, you'll have to look more closely at the data to find the right way forward—for example, decaf coffee. Let's say you already have a *dark roast*, *nutty-tasting* decaf espresso option from *Brazil*, but it doesn't sell super well and customers don't seem thrilled about it. You also want to add a decaf batch brew option. Both decaf options need to stand up to milk, either cold or steamed.

- Your current decaf (dark, nutty) isn't a hit, so there's an opportunity to find a better bean
- It would simplify operations if you could find a single year-round decaf option to function both as espresso and batch brew, so a blend you can tweak throughout the year is better than a seasonal single origin
- Most customers will pair the decaf with milk, so needs to be bold enough to stand out
- *Therefore*, you can reasonably assume that a medium or dark blend that's *not* primarily nutty in flavor will be a great fit for your customers and objectives

Go down the list of the coffee experiences you want to provide to create a wish list of types of beans.

If you need extra help nailing down great-fit coffees, we allow Bellwether customers to send in samples of coffees they're already using, so we can help match up existing coffees with new beans from the Green Coffee Marketplace. Let us know if we can help!

You don't have to replace all your coffees at once. We suggest starting with a handful of core coffees—**three to four coffees is typically a great starting point.** By starting small, you give yourself the opportunity to get your systems in place and set yourself up for sustained success before adding too much complexity.

Where to Source the Right Coffees for Your Business

Between identifying importing partners, sample roasting and cupping coffees, and dealing with contracts, sourcing coffee quickly becomes cumbersome and overwhelming—even for experienced coffee professionals.

That’s why we built the Bellwether Green Coffee Marketplace, to give new coffee roasters access to pre-vetted, sustainably sourced (with receipts!) beans.

It’s your coffee menu in a box. All of the sourcing, quality control, and flavor profiles you need from a high-quality, traceable coffee are at your fingertips.

For advanced buyers, we offer custom green buying and custom blending services. Our experts will work with you 1:1 to source exclusive lots, create signature coffees, and secure your inventory for long-term menu stability and peak differentiation.

All coffees on the Bellwether Green Coffee Marketplace are thoroughly vetted and the result of strong relationships, so you can be confident offering your customers the best coffee on the market at a competitive price point.

Retail Coffee Sales

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The retail sale of whole bean coffee, either online or in-store, is an often underutilized vehicle for increasing sales and educating customers about the dynamic nature of coffee.



Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co. A strategically planned online or physical retail coffee program can play a major role in ensuring your business's success and generate a significant amount of revenue. For example, if you were to sell a little as 5 retail bags a day at $17, you would generate an additional $31,000 per year!

How should I set up In-Store Sales?

- Your whole bean display should be accessible to customers as they wait to place orders and pick up coffee drinks but set apart enough that your customers won't feel rushed or jostled as they read the labels and consider their options.
- Keep your display at eye level so that your customers won't have to bend over or crouch while browsing.
- Your display should convey a sense of abundance. A plentiful, broad display allows multiple customers to handle the bags and make their decisions comfortably.

What are some best practices for selling my coffee online?

If you've already got a website for your business, you're halfway there. Many businesses use something like Wix or Squarespace as an easy website builder. Neither requires you to know anything about coding! You choose a template and update it to match your brand. Once your website is up and running, you'll want to think about how to accept sales. First, check with your website provider to understand if there are existing eCommerce plugins or compatible apps to choose from.

Here are some common solutions:

Square

There's a good chance you might already use Square in your retail shop. If that's the case, it's fast and simple to set up an online shop. You'll also have several pricing options to choose from so you can pick the plan that works best for you. As you grow and scale, you can always choose a different pricing plan. Be sure to make sure it's compatible with your existing website.

Shopify

If you're an online shopper, you've likely already heard of Shopify – another popular eCommerce platform. Shopify offers pricing for businesses of all sizes and a 14-day free trial, so you can get started on figuring it all out today for free. It's also

compatible with many primary website builders such as Wix, Squarespace, Weebly, and WordPress. Learn more here.

Other things to keep in mind...

If you're already using **Squarespace** as your website, be sure to check out their Menu of Extensions to see if some of their offerings are a good fit for your online business. They also have loads of preset eCommerce templates here.

If you've got a **WordPress** site, you might want to research WooCommerce's Extension Store for a la carte app plugins if you're looking for more advanced additions like subscriptions or gifting options in your online store.

Once your online store is ready to go, you can begin accepting orders from your customers.

Roasted Coffee: Packaging + Equipment Recommendations & FAQs

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The packaging you choose for your coffee is essential for preserving freshness and enhancing the coffee experience for customers. Selecting the right materials and features ensures that your coffee remains enticing and fresh.



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Materials + Storage

Generally speaking, while compostable packing is better for the planet, it does not preserve coffee's freshness as well as aluminum foil-lined coffee bags. With technological advancements, and the need to make compostable packaging better at maintaining coffee freshness, we are optimistic that compostable packaging will be comparable to aluminum foil-lined coffee bags in the future.

To learn more about coffee freshness, check out this video from Dr. Samo Smrke from the Zurich University of Applied Sciences.

Should my customers store roasted coffee in the freezer?

In general, storing well-sealed roasted coffee in colder temperatures, like a freezer, will slow down the chemical reactions that stale coffee. There are many articles written saying that storing your coffee in the freezer will encourage the formation of water crystals on the coffee. However, current research suggests that there is not enough water in roasted coffee to form water crystals, and as long as the coffee bag is sealed well, whether you freeze slow or fast, placing your packaged coffee into a colder environment will keep it fresher for longer.

Packaging

Every roaster has their own method for choosing bags and packaging materials. Here are a few brands we recommend:

- Elevate Packaging
- Sav-On Bags
- Roastar
- PBFY
- Savor Brand

Or if you're looking for compostable bags, we recommend:

- TricorBraun (formerly Pacific Bag)
- MTPAK

- TEK

Labels

Here are a few companies that make custom labels and stickers:

- Richmark Labels
- Vista Print
- Moo
- SmartPress
- Inkreadible
- Avery

Alternatively, you can print and alter your own labels for about 20c each with the upfront investment of a Primera Printer. The LX500 Color Printer is the one that we recommend.

Packaging + Labeling FAQs

What does it mean to rest or degas my coffee?

Roasting on-site means that you will have incredibly fresh coffee. After you have roasted, you can bag your coffee immediately, but you will need to allow the freshly roasted coffee to degas for 3-5 days before serving. Your coffee will be able to degas in a sealed bag or a lidded container.

When you roast coffee, gases like carbon dioxide, form inside the bean. These gases escape from the freshly roasted coffee after roasting and, particularly for the first couple of days after roasting, interfere with the flavor and extraction. Don't worry, carbon dioxide in your beans isn't a bad thing: it has an important role in coffee quality, as an indicator of freshness.

Can I bag my coffee immediately after roasting it?

Yes, you can. After you have roasted, you can bag your coffee immediately, but you will need to allow the freshly roasted coffee to degas for 3-5 days before serving.

How do I keep track of my coffee bags and labels?

Be sure to clearly mark your roasts. Make sure to include both the type of coffee and the roast date.

Can I say or label that I am serving or selling organic coffee if I am not a certified organic facility?

Great question! It would be best if you kept up to date on current rules and regulations by following the guidelines set forth by the USDA. Here's a great place to read more.

For the roasted coffee to be labeled certified organic, the coffee needs to be roasted and handled in a certified organic facility. This often includes a completely separate roaster, packaging, etc., dedicated to organic coffee production. For organically certified coffees, you can say "organically grown," but the packaging cannot stay "certified organic" or use the USDA organic seal.

Another thing to note is that if you purchased a marketplace coffee in boxes, it is no longer considered organic. However, anything in full bags will still be considered organic since it has not been broken down and processed. As a roaster, though, you technically need to be certified by a certifying body to sell the product as organic certified.

Are there any federal guidelines for packaging coffee?

Yes.Beverage and food labeling requires producers to follow strict regulations. Luckily for coffee manufacturers who produce and sell 100% pure coffee, they are exempt from the complex nutrition labeling process.

Here is a link to an article that has a little more information about this. To learn more about coffee labeling and packaging visit the FDA.gov

Do I need to think about Barcodes?

Barcoding is required if you are considering selling to a grocery store or similar business. UPC codes are unique to every product on earth, and they are all controlled by a central registry of codes.

Some people will 'resell' their unused barcodes for a discount.

We recommend checking out buyabarcode.com, which will sell distinct, never used UPC codes that are guaranteed to work at multiple retailers. You can print them from your home or office printer onto label paper that can be purchased from an office supply store.

Every type of coffee will need its own UPC code. For example, if you have two blends and two single origins, you'll need 4 UPC codes. Each bag will need a sticker.

Again, this is only in the event you want to sell to grocery stores or a similar business that requires it. Cafes and other retailers won't require it.

Bag Sealing/Impulse Sealer Recommendations + FAQs

When you start to bag your own coffee for retail, you will need a sealer to seal the bags. A tabletop hand-operated bag sealer works perfectly well. This 8-inch hand-operated impulse sealer is a great tool to help get you started.

If you require a sealer that can handle a little more volume and is a little faster, here are a few options:

- **IMPAK Foot-Operated Impulse Sealers $225-315**
- **Metronic 12 Inch Impulse Sealer$62**
- **Sealer Sales WNS-200D Table Top Direct Heat Sealer$875**

What's the best setting to use on the heat-sealer provided in the new customer welcome kit?

We always recommend following the instructions included with the heat sealer you received. In our experience, setting the dial on the heat-sealer to 6 works best. Seal the bag by placing it into the heat sealer and pressing down and holding for 3

seconds. If dial number 6 does quite seal your bag, turn the dial to 7 and try again. Repeat until your bag feels sealed.

Scales + Weighing

Scales for weighing your roasted coffee for serving or filing your retail bags are relatively easy to find, and most scales will do the trick. However, if you are weighing out 5lbs bags of coffee for bulk or wholesale consumption, you might need something with a little more weighing capacity. Please note, making sure you are filling your bags with advertised weight on your packaging is required by law.

Here are a few suggestions of scales that are suitable for weighing your roasted coffee:

- **Accuteck ShipPro Digital Scale** **$39.99** (110lb weight limit / 2g or 0.1oz accuracy)
- **Acacia Pearl** **$150** (11lb weight limit / 0.003oz or 0.1g accuracy)
- **Gator Coffee Scale** **$27** (6.6lb weight limit / 0.003oz or 0.1g accuracy)

To read more about scales recommendations for specific purposes around a coffee business, please check out our Coffee Business Supplies article.

Roasted Coffee Storage + Containers

For your roasted coffee, it's convenient to have buckets that you can easily label, stack, carry, and scoop from for bagging. Here are a few that we suggest:

- **Rubbermaid Brute 10 Gallon** **$22.82**
- **Cambro 5.5 Gallon Pail** **$15, (Lid For Pail $1)**
- **Baytec 5 Gallon Food Safe Bucket with Lids 3 pack** **$89**

Coffee Scoops

We suggest using separate scoops for your green and roasted coffee because it is best to avoid cross-contamination of green and roasted coffee beans. Green coffee dust can end up on roasted coffee, tainting the flavor. Either a metal or plastic

scoop will work. It's nice to have a larger scoop for weighing out green coffee in preparation for roasting like these:

- **Winco AS-58oz Aluminum Scoop $22**
- **Update International 38oz Aluminum Scoop $14**

For bagging or weighing roasted coffee, it's a little easier to have a couple of smaller scoops handy like these:

- **Winco AS-24oz Aluminum Scoop $13**
- **Barista Basics Scale Scoop $32**
- **Update International 24oz Aluminum Scoop $13**

Blending Equipment

Blends can be a significant offering to any coffee business. To read more about blends and blending coffee, please check out our Blends + Blending article.

Whether you are planning on pre or post-roast blending, it can often be very handy to blend the coffee in a separate device to make sure the coffee is blended properly. Here is one blending device we suggest:

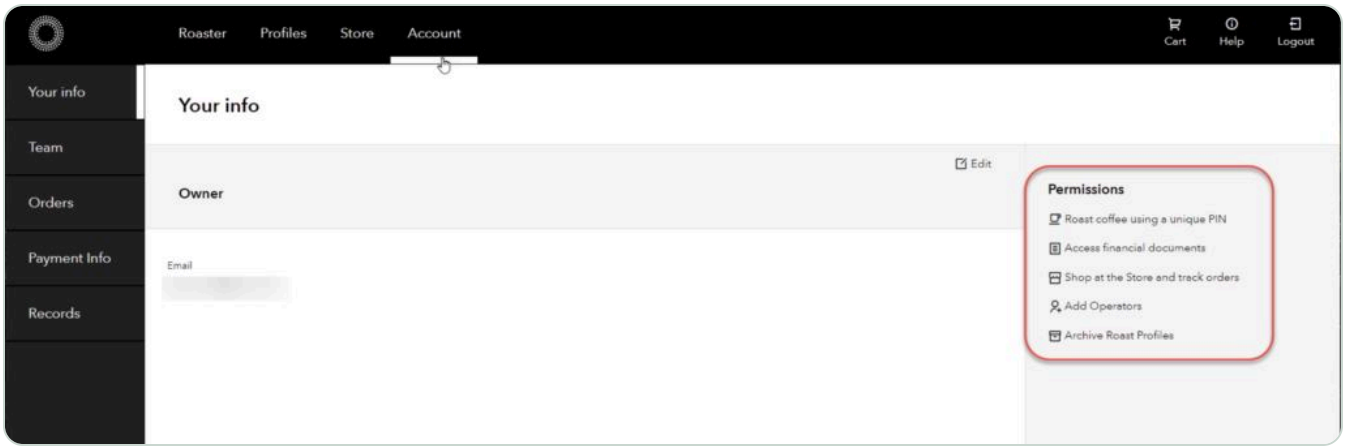
- **Granger White Food Grade Mixer $1,010**

Accounts: Editing Your Information

Source: Bellwether Coffee, https://help.bellwethercoffee.com/roaster-manager-1. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

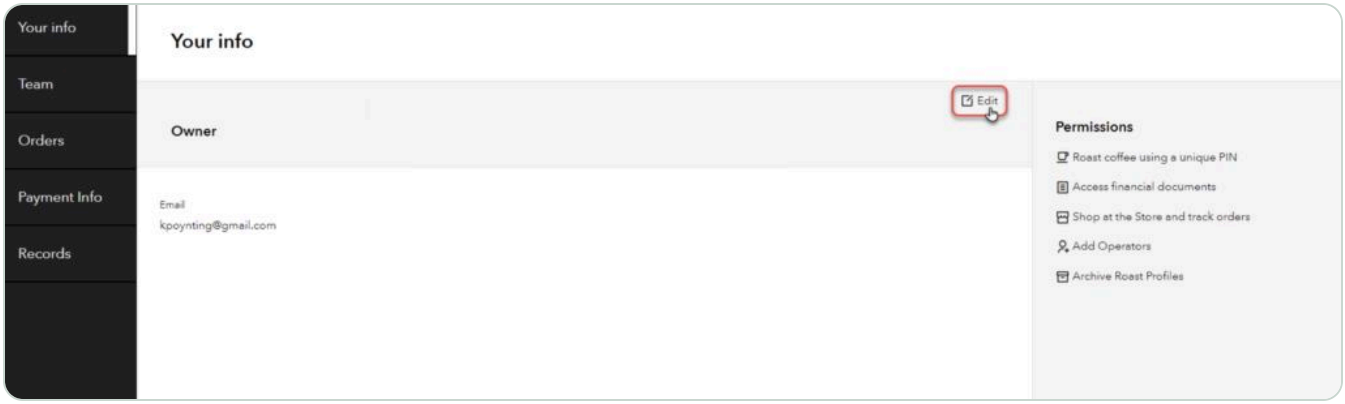
Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

In your account info, you can view some very basic information, including contact info (email address), and permissions associated with your account.



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Editing your Account information is simple. Click **Edit**from the right corner of the workspace to make any changes.



Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

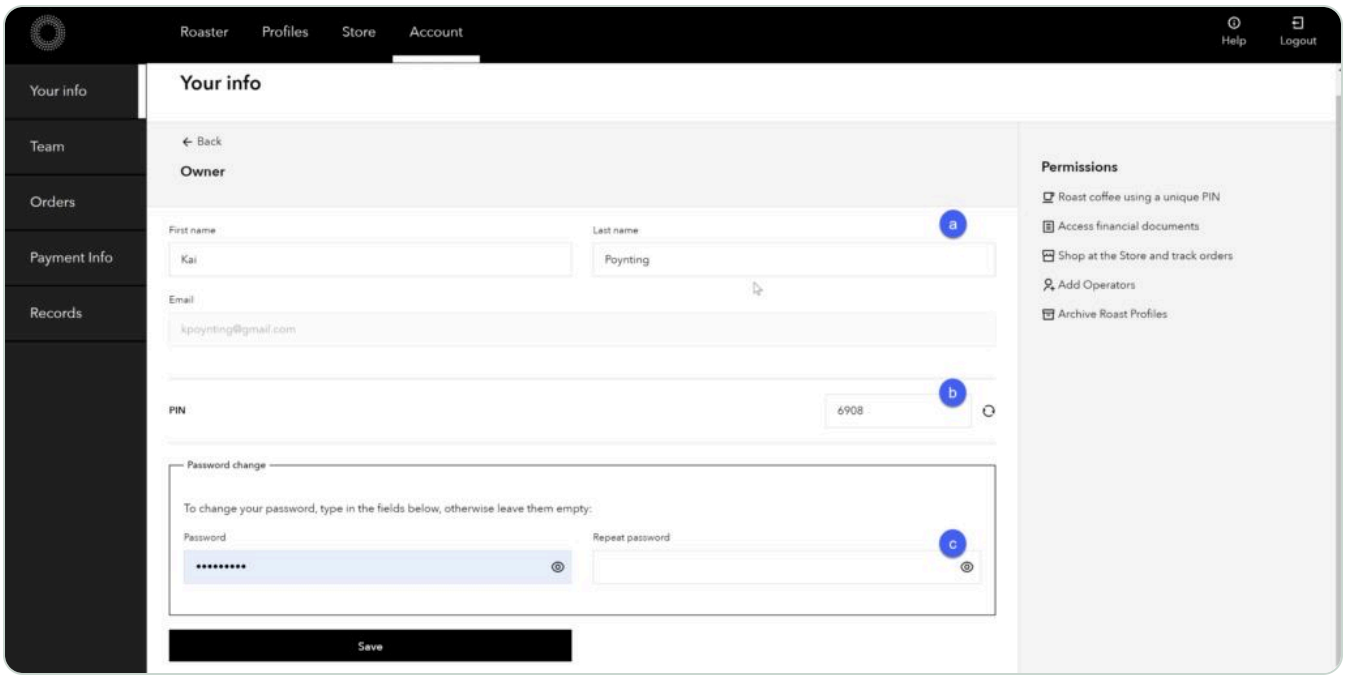
Once in the edit menu, you can change:

a) **the name associated with your account**

b) **change the PIN for PIN access to the roaster –** Bellwether recommends using the random function in creating your PIN for better security, but you can type in a set PIN as well.

c) **change and confirm your password**

Note: Email Address cannot be changed without support assistance as it is a basis for account access. Contact support if a change in email address is required.



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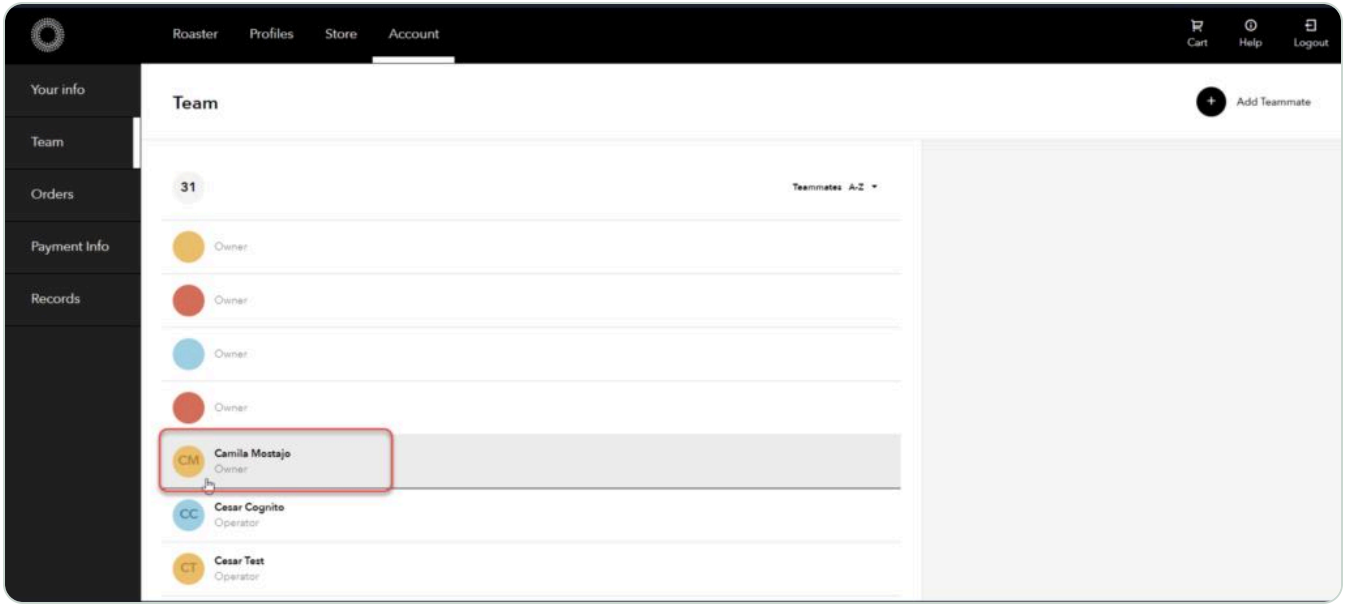
Click **Save**to complete the changes.

Accounts: Manage/Add Teammates

Source: Bellwether Coffee, https://help.bellwethercoffee.com/roaster-manager-accounts. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

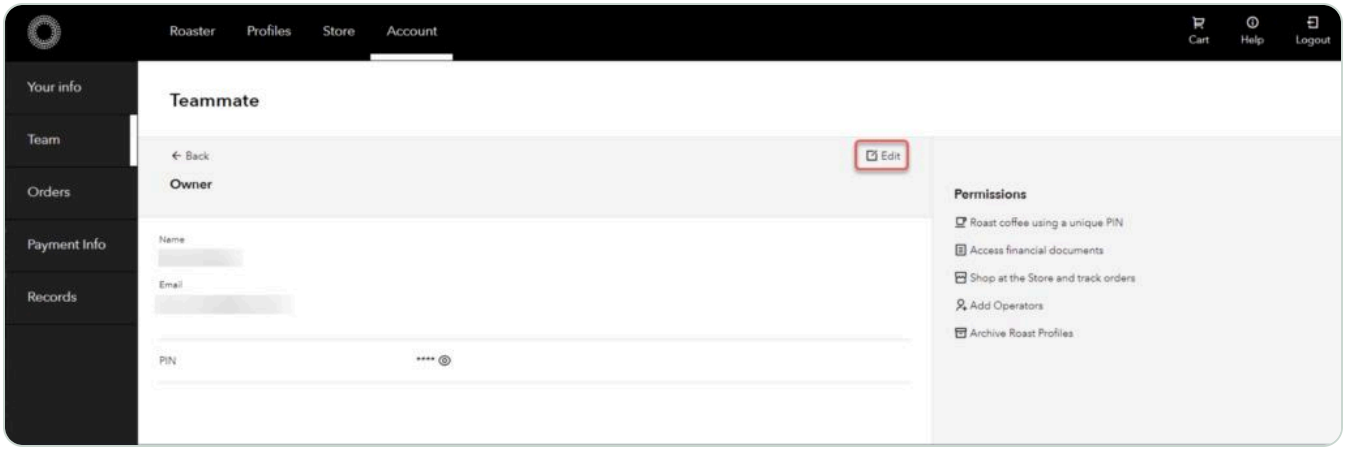
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In this workspace, you can see all team members for your organization, and add new ones. If you are an owner or above, you can manage account details for each team member. By clicking the name, you can open the teammate's user info to make any modifications.



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You can edit these team members' info, provided you have the appropriate credentials.



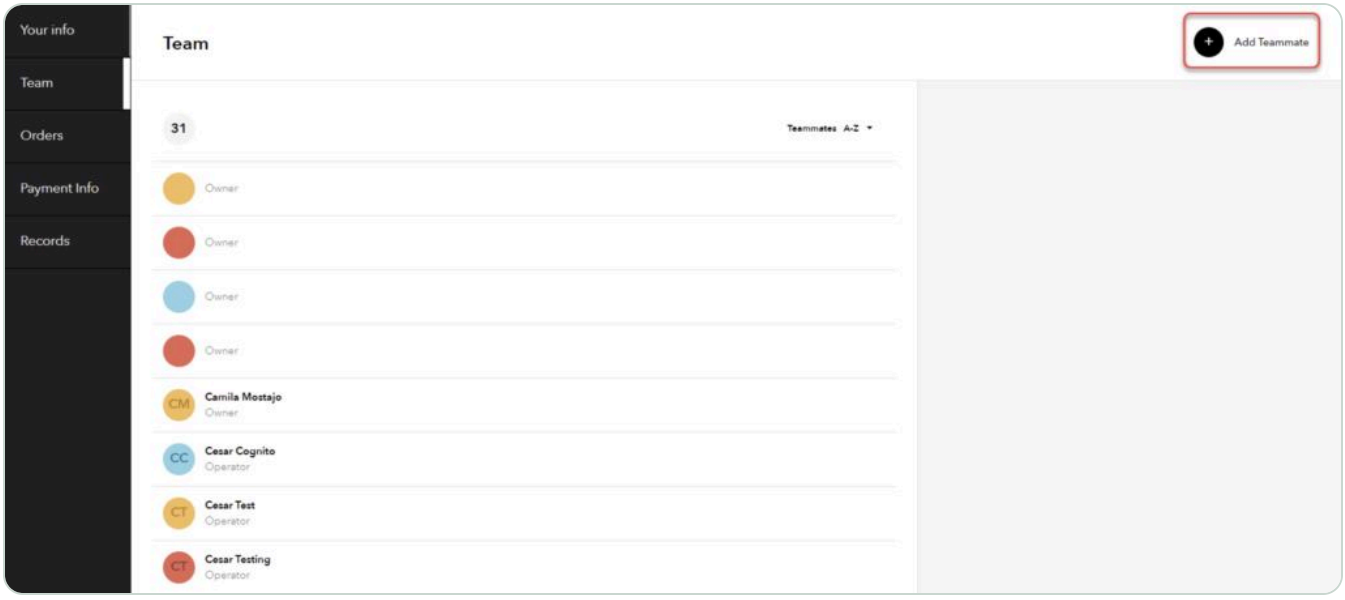
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These edits are performed in the same way as editing your own, save you can also delete the user.



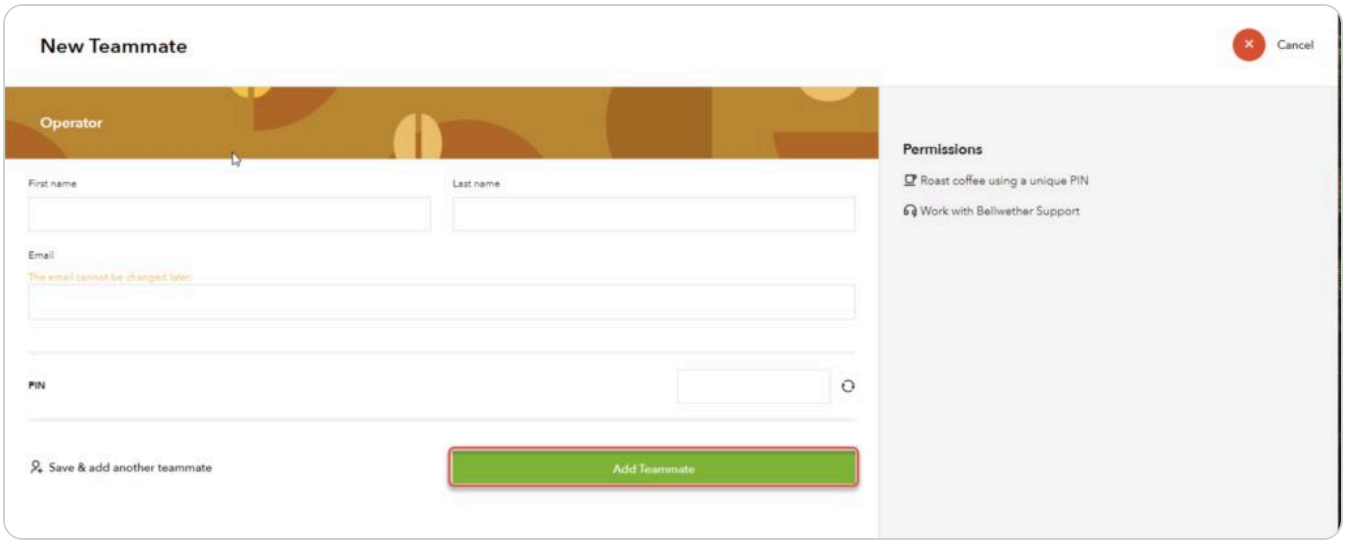
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To add a Teammate, click **Add Teammate**.



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Provide the name, email address, a pin, and click **Add Teammate**.



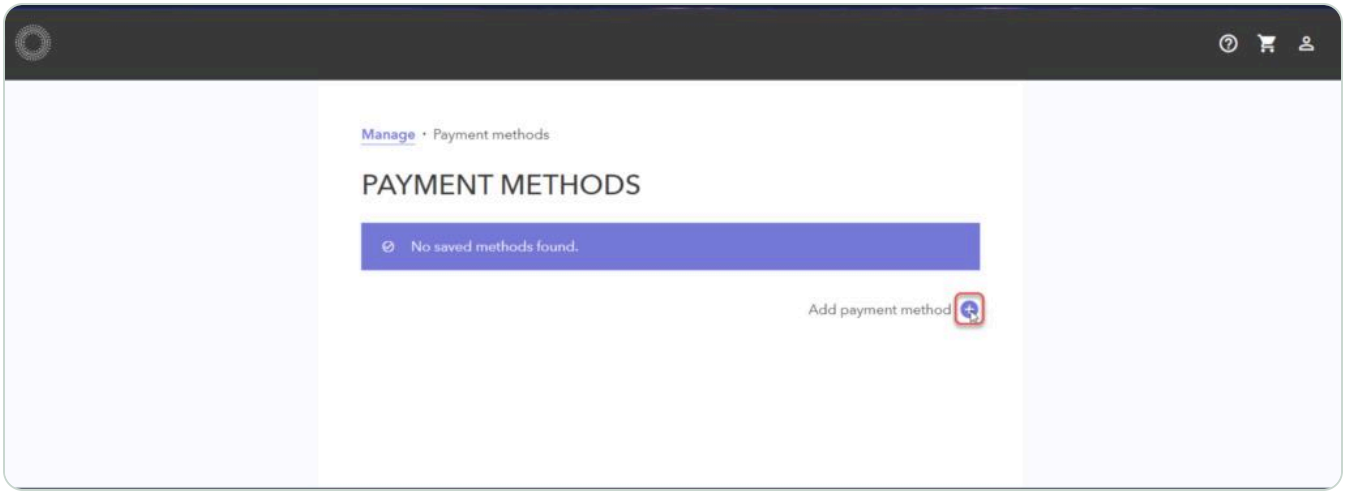
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Accounts: Add/Manage Payment Methods

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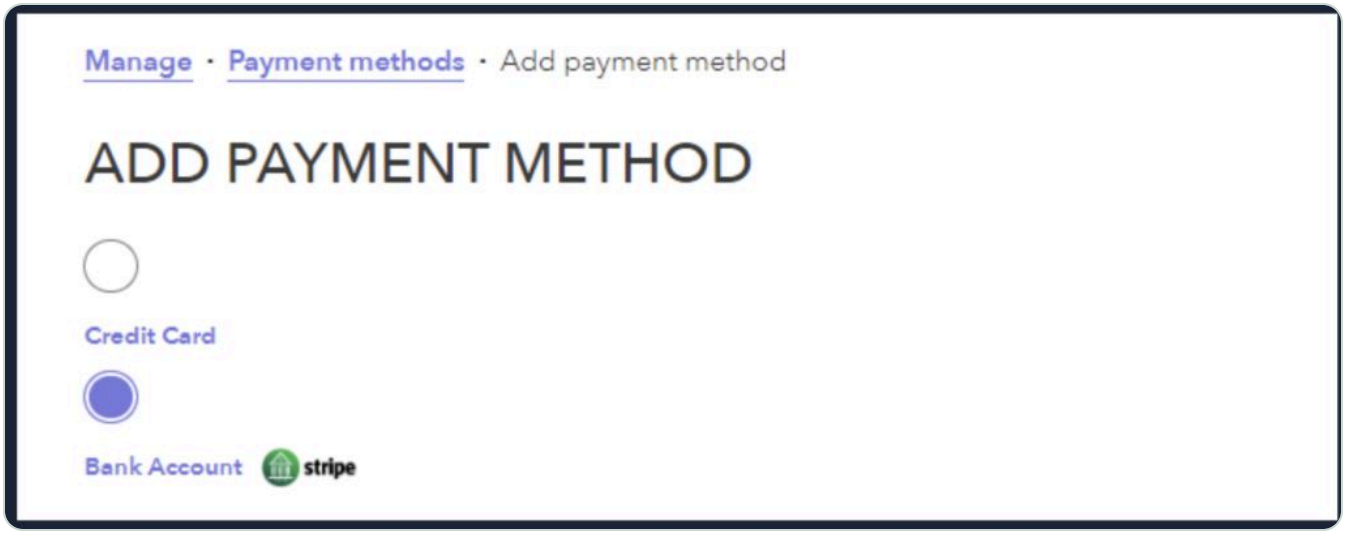
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In this workspace, you can add or manage payment methods. Existing payment methods will be presented if available for your organization. To add a payment method, click the plus sign beside **Add payment method**.



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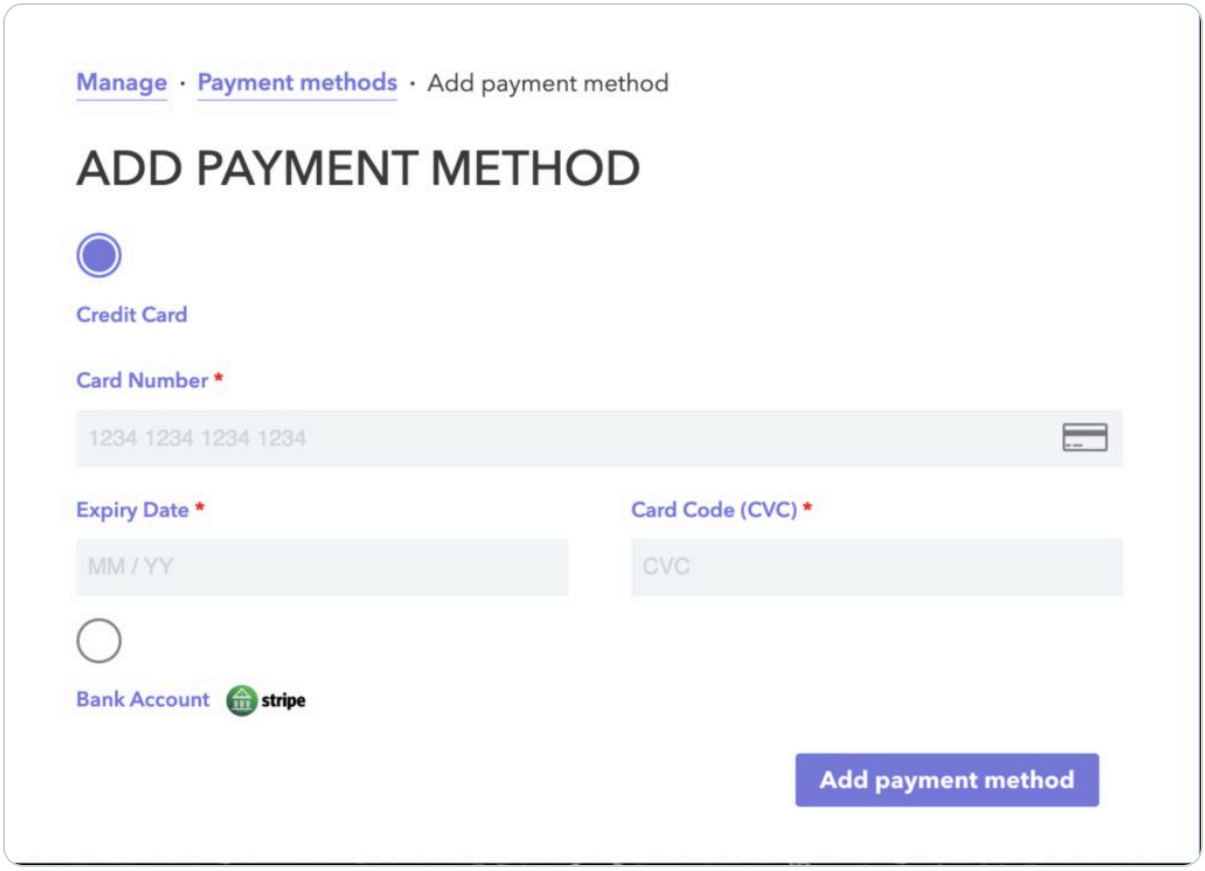
You will be able to add credit card or bank account payment methods. Select the desired option.



Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

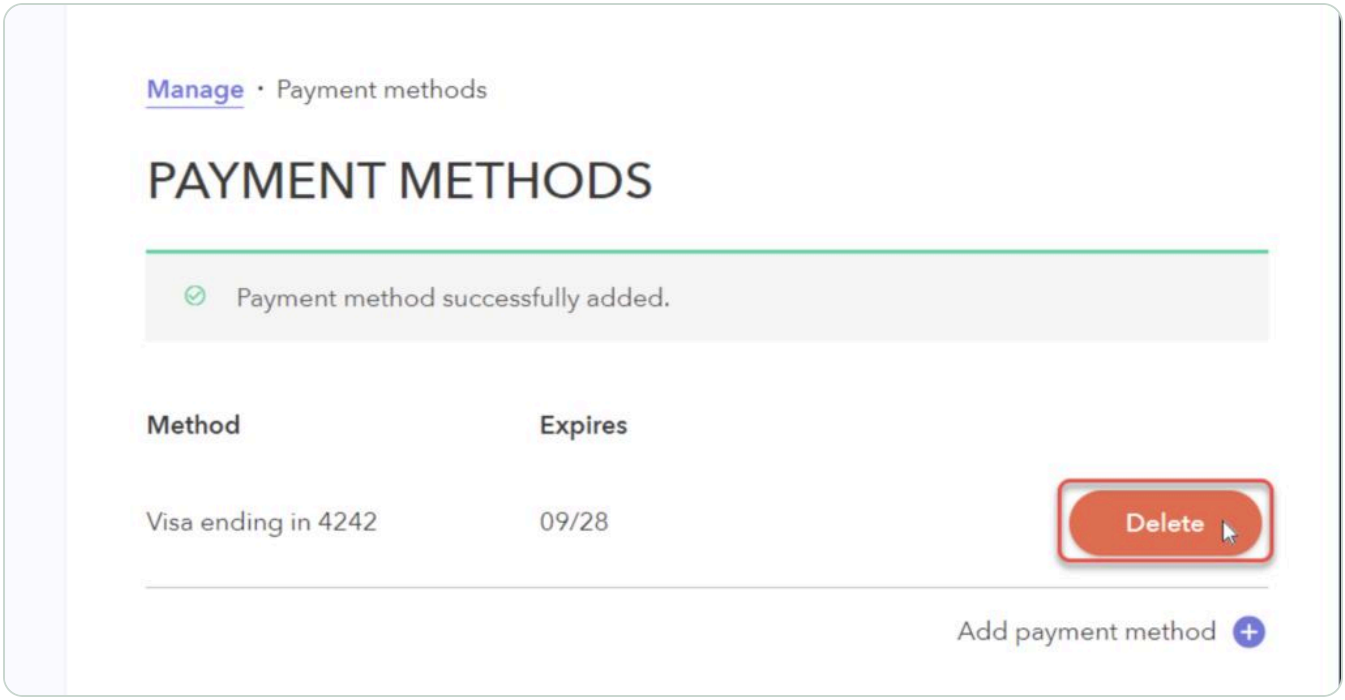
Credit Card

Enter the card details, and click **Add Payment Method**. Details below are test details. However, they serve to illustrate the process of a real card.
Note: The Test Mode prompt will not be present on the production system.



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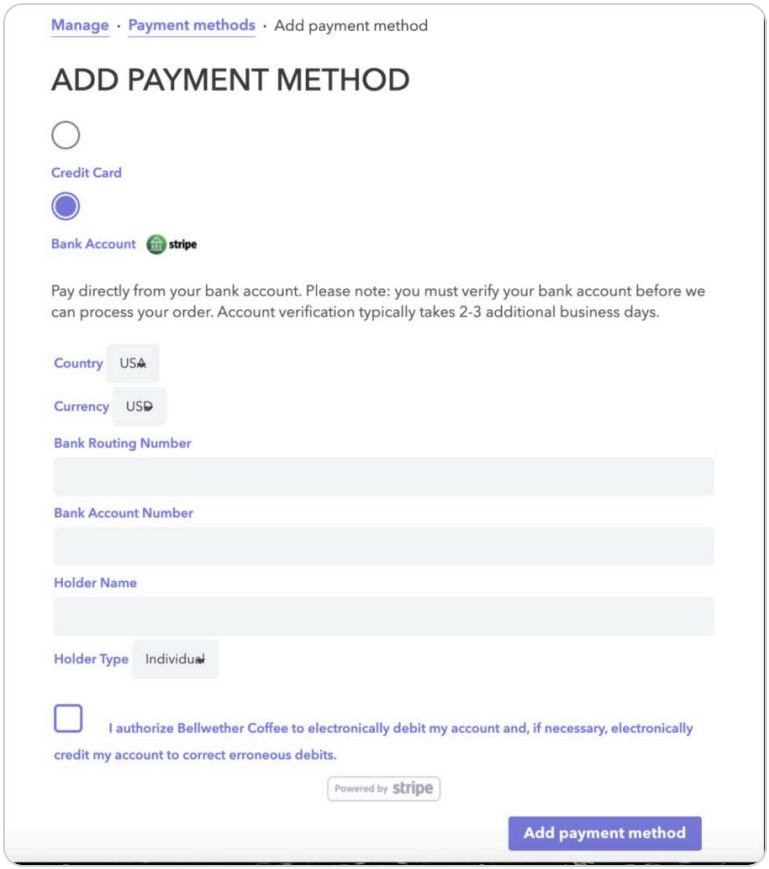
Once added, the payment method will be listed. You can also delete any existing payment method for your organization if you are an owner.



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Banking Information

Adding and verifying banking information is accomplished via Stripe. Enter the account details you wish to use for your purchases, and click **Add Payment Method** when complete.



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Roaster v. Roaster Comparison

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Roasting on the Bellwether Roaster Compared to Traditional Drum Roaster

The roasting process on a Bellwether fundamentally similar to the roasting process on any other high-quality commercial roaster: The beans are held in a drum-shaped roasting chamber and exposed to hot air while being mixed using a rotary agitator. This process is used in traditional open-flame drum roasters, like the Probat and Loring. Proponents of open-flame drum roasters will claim they have more conductive energy transfer. While this is correct, all roasters use primarily convective heat transfer, and all use some conduction.

This continuity in the roasting process is by design. At Bellwether, we think traditional roasters produce good coffee — they just do it in a way that doesn't provide the consistency, control, ease of use, and planet-friendly processes that the Bellwether Roaster provides.

Traditional roasters use a single-pass design, which takes cool air that is flash-heated to roast the coffee, then exhausts the air through ventilation stacks. The incoming air is of variable temperature, making it challenging to replicate precise roasting processes. Compared to the Bellwether Roaster, traditional roasters have little thermal monitoring, which makes it challenging to know different heat measurements throughout the machine at any given moment.

Removing External Variables

The Bellwether Roaster takes the exhausted air, cleans it, and reuses it. This process provides a hot, stable temperature of the air that's being recirculated inside of the machine. The Bellwether Roaster is well-insulated, has twelve thermal probes, and

multiple pressure sensors installed throughout the roaster to allow for precise monitoring and control of the roasting process. These innovative design advances remove most of the external variables that have historically made profile replication challenging.

The control mechanisms of a Bellwether Roaster are so good, a Head Roaster can now design a roast profile and the profile can be executed on any Bellwether Roaster, anywhere in the world, precisely as intended. It's no longer a requirement to become an expert in the operation of any single machine; now, the artisans of our industry can concentrate on correlating roast profile design to flavor profile results and perfecting their craft.

Using the Bellwether Roasters vs. Traditional Roasters

If you are accustomed to traditional roasters and are using a Bellwether Roaster for the first time, you should use the same basic principles. Your roast curve will look similar to those on other roasters with a couple of notable differences:

- On a Bellwether, you define the result — not the process. You will not be adjusting gas valves or airflow in real-time, but instead, you will be drawing a curve on the Bellwether app and then tasting the results. You can adjust the roast profile curve to more precisely hit your flavor goals. When you're happy with the result, you can repeat the profiles exactly, experiencing consistency like never before.
- Like all machines, there are physical limitations to what roast curves the machine can follow. While the Bellwether has ample power, just like conventional roasters, laws of physics still apply.
- From 0—1 minute, 95% of the curve's shape is determined by the batch size and charge temperature.
- The rate-of-rise of the coffee temperature will peak early and tend to decline as the roast proceeds.
- Since metal stores much more heat than air, Bellwether uses the temperature of the metal roasting chamber to determine the ideal preheat temperature (i.e. the "charge temperature"). Other roasters measure air temperature, which is a less reliable predictor of how much heat is stored in the roaster. As a result, the

charge temperature on a Bellwether Roaster is usually around 75°F lower than you would see if you were using air temperature as your measurement.

Selling Wholesale Coffee to Grocery Stores

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This article outlines our top strategies for getting your coffee into stores, including: tips for getting meetings with local buyers, questions you need to ask every potential retail partner, and essential promotion tips to help accelerate sales.

One of the best opportunities for generating sustained revenue for a coffee roaster is selling to grocery stores. With just a handful of wholesale coffee customers, you can increase sales volume, spread your realm of influence, and capture more customers in new markets.

The challenge is getting your foot in the door.

Grocery stores are notoriously difficult to get products into. Buyers for grocery stores often review dozens of products per day. Unseating established brands for shelf space can be a hard sell. And chances are, the grocery stores near you *already* have coffee roaster relationships.

Despite these challenges, getting into grocery stores can be a powerful and sustainable way to grow your business.

Principles for Selling to Grocery

Is Your Brand Retail-Ready?

Selling coffee in a cafe or online is frequently a multi-channel experience, with more than one avenue for engaging with customers. When you're trying to sell from a grocery store shelf, the sales cycle—in its simplest form—only has two back-to-back stages.

- **They see your product.** If your packaging blends into the other coffees on the shelf, customers will have a hard time feeling inspired to take a deeper look at your bag. A simple, stunning design is essential for capturing that initial attention.
- **They pick up your bag.** When a shopper picks up your bag, they're looking for signals that your coffee will be a good fit for them. Lean into the emotional connection by sharing your story, highlighting your values, or identifying a core element of your business that makes your customers happy. If your packaging feels bland or uninspiring, they'll set it back down.

The more you understand who your customer is and why they pick your coffee over others, the more targeted you can make your packaging—and the more confident the buyer will be.

Buyers are eager not just to put good products on shelves, but good products that customers will build a relationship with. Developing emotionally engaging packaging and messaging is one of the best things you can do before speaking with buyers. *Side note: we suggest doing some quick research to understand how UPC barcodes workwhile you design your retail packaging.*

How to Price Your Coffee for Grocery Retail

Pricing tends to feel more complicated than it is. Let's keep it simple.

Grocery stores generally sell coffee at a 50% markup. That means, if the retail price of the bag is $16.00, they will want to buy that bag from you for $8.00. The markup percentage will vary slightly from store to store, with some stores offering as low as a 40% markup.

The question only you can answer is this: *What profit margin do you need to earn to make it worth it?*

Example: Let's say you add up your COGS, packaging and supplies, shipping, and operating costs and land around $6.75 for each 12-ounce bag of coffee beans. Selling to grocery stores at $8.00 per bag generates $1.25 in profit per sale (15.6% margin).

Is that profit margin worth it for your business? It's not quite as high as you'd earn selling coffee to customers in a cafe, but you can expect sales to be predictable.

These numbers will be heavily dependent on your operation, so make sure you have a realistic idea of your target wholesale price and profit margin before reaching out to stores.

Top Strategies for Getting Your Coffee Into Stores

Meeting With Local Buyers: Pitch Your Product and Earn Placements in Stores

Connecting with retail buyers is a matter of persistence. There are marketplaces and agencies that can help you get in front of people, but when you're starting out, there's nothing as powerful as the in-person pitch.

- **Start with local stores and regional distributors.** Trying to pitch Whole Foods right off the bat is a recipe for disappointment. Buyers from local stores are generally eager to work with local businesses, are more accessible, and have less red tape to deal with.
- **Start cold calling and door knocking.** Call stores and ask to speak to buyers. Send cold emails directly to a buyer when you can find their contact details. Drop off coffee samples for the team to enjoy and make sure to leave a 1-2 page sell sheet that tells buyers why your coffee is so special (and easy to purchase) as they sample your coffee. Remember, persistence is key!
- **Be prepared to tell your story.** Stores already sell coffee, and buyers hear pitches every day, so be ready to demonstrate what your coffee means for the store's customers. Does it satisfy a particular niche? Is there something unique about your process or values? Rehearse your story and break your key messages down into quick, bite-sized arguments.
- **Present a marketing plan.**Grocery stores need to know your coffee will sell without them having to market your products for you. Presenting a plan for how you'll inspire customers to buy your coffee from the store is sure to get a few impressed looks.

Ultimately, the buyer should leave the meeting with a sense of partnership. You're not just another vendor of coffee beans—you're a trustworthy and thoughtful

advocate for their store and customers.

Questions To Ask A Store's Buyer

Pitch meetings are primarily about impressing buyers, but they're also a chance for you to vet the relationship and store. We suggest asking some of these questions to demonstrate preparedness and reduce confusion down the road.

- What is the store's expectation for demos and marketing support?
- Will the store place frequent orders, or does it prefer a regular fulfillment schedule?
- What are the store's distribution preferences (delivery days, times, frequency)?
- Would the buyer prefer to have "best by" or "roasted on" dates on your bags?
- Are there any "free fill" requirements? *We strongly suggest avoiding giving away free products other than buyer samples.*
- What does the ideal partnership look like?

Strategies to Promote Your Wholesale Coffee

Getting your coffee in stores is the hard part, but it's not the end of the journey. You can't rely on stores to market your products for you.

Grocery store marketing, unlike e-commerce and other common sales channels, is all about brand awareness. There's no email with a "Buy Now" button, so the trick is to get people as familiar as possible with your product *before* they see it on the shelf.

There are a couple of powerful ways to do that.

Share the Good News on Every Channel

Launching a product in a grocery store is a big deal, so don't be afraid to celebrate by letting your community know the good news. Take a picture of exactly where your coffee is placed in the store to make it as easy as possible for customers to find you.

We suggest sharing the news on every platform you can:

- Social media channels
- Email lists
- Your website (bonus points for an interactive map)

Go Bold With In-Store Demos

Live demos are a key strategy for newer brands with minimal brand awareness. In many grocery categories, and especially coffee, you're not competing with other products as much as you are people's *habits.* People probably already have a coffee routine they enjoy. You have to show them why they'll love your product more.

A regular demo schedule is a perfect way to hand out tasty samples of your coffee to customers as they walk by. It's the best way to turn your coffee from an abstract product on a shelf into a memorable sensory experience. And it's the best way to disrupt a well-established coffee habit.

We suggest following these best-practices:

- Proactively engage with customers as they walk by (don't wait for them to inquire)
- Be generous with handing out samples
- Display your entire product range
- Have products on display that customers can grab for their cart on the spot
- Create big, attention-earning displays
- Sell the deeper story—your coffee is more than *just* beans

Lastly, and this doesn't get said enough, have fun.

Even if shoppers don't buy your coffee right there on the spot, they're likely to remember an enjoyable and delicious experience for months to come. Next time they walk down the coffee aisle and see your bag, they'll get those good vibes again.

Setting up Your Wholesale Coffee Business

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Setting up a wholesale coffee program is a great way to utilize the full value of your Bellwether Roaster. You can engage with a variety of new revenue-generating avenues, like online sales and subscriptions, and stock your retail shelves.

Wholesale coffee?! You most likely already have what you need to get started!

Have you ever considered selling your roasted coffee online or setting up a wholesale coffee business? Setting up a wholesale coffee program is a great way to utilize the full value of your Bellwether Roaster. You can engage with a variety of new revenue-generating avenues, like online sales and subscriptions, and stock your retail shelves. Also, you can reduce risk if brick-and-mortar operations are disrupted, or when business is slow.

While it can seem like a big undertaking, if you break it down into steps it's actually fairly straightforward. Here are a few key things to consider when breaking into wholesale or e-commerce for your roasted coffee:

- **Cost and pricing**
- **Where to sell and what to expect**
- **Starting off simple**

Cost + Pricing

A typical wholesale coffee menu includes pricing for both 5lb bags and 12oz bags. Most often, the 5lb bags are priced by the pound, and 12oz bags are priced by the bag.

Who to Sell to & What to Expect

Now, you're roasting your own delicious coffee. You have bags and labels ready to go, and a menu to show prospective customers and wholesale partners. What's next? The next step is reaching out digitally or in-person to let people know what you have to offer.

Aside from individual orders or subscriptions from your online store, typical wholesale coffee relationships include:

- Coffee retailers
- Restaurants
- Hotels
- Office buildings
- Your friend's start-up
- Your community center
- And so much more!

Here is an article from Daily Coffee News that has some salient points about roasting coffee for the Hospitality Industry. It also talks about what a customer could potentially ask for or require as part of a wholesale coffee relationship. In the current landscape of specialty coffee, there are many "traditional" wholesale outlets. These include coffee shops and a growing number of "non-traditional" wholesale relationships, like hotels, that are emerging every day. Keep that in mind when you are brainstorming who you could potentially sell your coffee to.

Finally, the average US non-chain coffee company can expect to serve and sell around 100lbs of roasted coffee per week. When forming these wholesale relationships, be mindful of how much green coffee you'll need to keep on hand. You'll want to make sure you can keep up with roasted coffee demand!

Start Simple & Take It One Step at a Time

One thing to remember when you are setting up your wholesale coffee program is: start simple and take it **one step at a time.**

Many successful wholesale coffee programs are built on the foundation of two or three delicious blends or single origin coffees. Think of an espresso blend, a drip coffee profile, and a decaf offering. This is also a great way to save on purchasing different bags or labels for many different coffees. It also allows you to streamline your shipping and reduce your shipping costs.

Start with a small menu. If a customer is looking for something specific, that's an excellent opportunity to build a solid relationship. Roast what they're looking for. Keep track of special requests. If many customers are requesting the same thing, that might just be a new coffee to put on your menu. Your Bellwether Roaster and the Bellwether Marketplace already offer you the ability to be nimble and respond quickly.

Setting up a wholesale coffee program can *feel* like a complicated process. But, knowing what to expect and taking one step at a time helps lower stress and prepare you for success. Remember, setting up a wholesale coffee program allows you to utilize the full potential of your Bellwether Roaster. It's a great way to form new relationships, strengthen community, and add value to your business for years to come.

Shipping FAQs

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This article provides answers to commonly asked questions about the shipping process for your Bellwether Marketplace order.

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When will my coffee arrive?

Box Orders: All box orders ship via UPS from the CA and NJ warehouses. Orders received by 11am PST (Mon-Fri) will be processed and shipped the same day. Orders received after 11am PST will ship the following business day.

Bag Orders: Bag orders ship from the CA and NJ warehouses. Processing time for bag orders typically takes 2-3 business days from the time of your order before the shipment is loaded onto a truck. Shipment tracking only becomes available once the pallet is loaded onto a truck. Bellwether will provide this information to the email address used during checkout as soon as it becomes available. Shipping times can vary depending on your distance from the warehouse location and delays can occur, so we strongly recommend giving at least 2-3 weeks for all bag orders.

Which additional freight services do I need?

Liftgate: Because bag orders are large and heavy, you might need additional services (or accessorials) to get the coffee to its intended storage location. A liftgate is the most common accessorial needed by customers. This is required if you do not have a forklift or dock at your delivery location. The liftgate allows the delivery driver to roll the pallet of coffee from the truck, onto a metal platform and down to ground level for delivery.

Limited Access: This is required when the driver is unable to quickly and easily deliver the shipment once they have arrived at the delivery location. This is typically required if your business is in a congested area with minimal parking for delivery trucks, the delivery path is obstructed or difficult to traverse, or any other reason that would require more than the typical 10-15 minutes to deliver the pallet.

Inside Delivery: This service is required if you prefer or need a delivery dropped inside your facility or shop. If you do not select this option, the driver will drop the shipment outside of the business.

Residential: This is required for delivery in a residential area.

How many bags of coffee fit on a pallet?

10 bags of coffee are the maximum that will fit onto a pallet. If you order more than 10 bags, this will necessitate additional pallets for your order.

Why am I getting two separate freight quotes?

If you are seeing two separate freight quotes at checkout, this means that there was not enough of a particular coffee in stock to fulfill your entire order from the warehouse closest to you, and the shipment is being fulfilled with stock from a second warehouse. If you do not want to pay for a separate shipment, please remove the stock from your order.

How do I know I'm getting the best shipping rate and carrier on my pallets of coffee? Not every carrier is the same and rates are variable.

Our custom shipping tool pulls a dozen or more live freight quotes from carriers based on the criteria you enter (business location, liftgate request, etc.). Our software chooses the 3 cheapest quotes and averages them to provide a flat rate to you. Behind the scenes, our team views the 3 carriers that were averaged to produce that rate and chooses the best and most reliable option for your order.

Can I pick my coffee order up from the warehouse?

We work with two warehouses in the United States. They are located in Alameda, CA and Carteret, NJ. During the checkout process, you will be given the opportunity to choose warehouse pick up as a convenient option. If this works for you, simply select it and proceed with your order.

Strategies To Lower Your Carbon Footprint

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Making your coffee shop more sustainable benefits your customers, the planet, and your bottom line, so we put together a list of 8 practical steps you can take to reduce your shop's carbon footprint.

The coffee industry has long been a target for environmentally-minded critics, and it's no surprise why. Single-use plastics are commonplace, food waste is abundant, and deforestation at origin hurts us all.

Research shows that customers, however, are eager to play their part in encouraging sustainable coffee shop practices. One 2018 study found that 60% of customers now look for indicators of sustainability when they purchase food products, and that 4 in 10 customers are willing to pay 50% more for products that are sustainably sourced and created.

Read on to discover...

- How to reduce, reuse, and recycle disposables effectively
- Actionable ways to reduce food, milk, and coffee waste
- Tips for using sustainable action steps as ethical marketing

Let's get creative and do right by our planet.

1. Find Partners That Prioritize Environmental Health

Our world runs on a web of commercial relationships that feed each other. Every partnership and supplier relationship sends a signal that you support what that

partner is doing. Unfortunately, not all partners are as environmentally-minded as they ought to be.

Prioritizing like-minded suppliers and partners is an important step in cleansing your shop from products and business practices that don't align with your values.

We suggest starting with the obvious: *your coffee supplier.* Look for indicators that your importer and roasting partner support the development of environmentally conscious farming practices. This support can be manifested in many ways.

- **Certification Assistance** — Your coffee supplier is an advocate and helping hand for farmers and cooperatives who want to dive into the hard work of earning a sustainability-focused certification, like Bird Friendly Alliance or Fair Trade.
- **Farmer-Level Development Support** — Coffee farmers are often aware of improvements they can make to their agricultural practices to better protect their land and resources. Some coffee buyers offer financial support to partner farms so they can enact those changes, like reclaiming forest land or conserving water.
- **Long-Term Partnerships** — Importers that work with producers across years help create a level of financial security that encourages farms and cooperatives to make sustainability-minded improvements.

Don't be afraid to talk to your roasting and importing partners about what they're doing to make a positive impact at origin.

It doesn't stop at coffee, however. Every product or ingredient that comes in and out of your coffee shop deserves a good review from time to time. Are those partners pursuing Earth-friendly practices?

- Ingredients for food products
- Consumer packaged goods
- Kitchen supplies
- Cleaning supplier
- Single-use items

Creating an ecosystem of business relationships that encourage sustainability is a way you can make an impact both in and beyond your store.

2. Offer a Discount to Customers Who Bring Reusable Cups

Giving customers who bring their own to-go drinkware a discount is common practice. Customers understand the trade-off—you save on the cup cost, they save on their coffee—and it's a simple way to gently nudge your customers to make more environmentally conscious choices.

When we asked around some coffee shops in the United States, we found **the most common discounts were $0.20 or $0.25 off** every time a customer brings their reusable cup. Some coffee shop owners warned against using a percentage off model, as the discount on more expensive drinks—like milk-heavy lattes—hits harder.

There are a few ways you can take this idea further.

- **Sell Reusables** — The most obvious is to carry reusable to-go mugs as a retail product, and use the ongoing discount as a value-add. A $25 travel mug with your logo on it, in the eyes of the customer, breaks even after 100 visits (which might enhance their loyalty to your shop). For your business, it's outsourced mobile advertising.
- **Borrow A Cup** — Starbucks is piloting a new Borrow A Cup program in Seattle that turns a single-use cup into a *thirty-use* cup. Customers deposit $1 for the cup, then get that $1 back in Starbucks credit when they return it. The cups are then cleaned and sanitized, of course.
- **The Nuclear Option** — Feeling bold? Simply nix single-use, to-go cups altogether like Oak Cliff Coffee Roasters in Dallas, Texas. Customers who want their drinks to-go are gently educated on the company's commitment to zero waste and are invited to purchase either a glass mason jar or an OCCR thermos.

No matter how you structure your discount or offer, make sure to communicate to customers what it means for your business and the environment. People love being invited to participate in things that help us all.

3. Put Your Ingredient Containers Back to Good Use

Minimizing disposable cups is a great way to get started, but trading out single-use for reusable doesn't have to stop there.

Our friends at Northern Lattes in San Antonio worked out a deal with their milk supplier to have milk delivered in reusable buckets.

If you sell bulk coffee—cold brew, nitro, pre-made lattes—your local health department might allow you to sell it in sanitized milk jugs or soda bottles (make sure to ask).

If you offer delivery, you can collect previous glassware for reuse. Chyrus's nitro coffee subscription offers customers $1 off if they place their previous delivery's glass growler on the porch when the next delivery arrives. The driver drops off the fresh coffee and takes the old jug back to the shop to be sanitized. Similarly, Yellow House Coffee sells a 4-pack of cold brew in sanitized soda bottles and offers $1 off when customers bring the empty bottles back.

4. Roast Coffee In-House, But Nix The Emissions

The coffee industry has a massive carbon footprint, and roasting makes up a whopping 15% of it. Traditional commercial roasters run on natural gas, which is unfortunately not as "green" as we had hoped as an industry. Not to mention, cities around the world are starting to enact natural gas bans to reduce environmental burden.

Thankfully, there's an alternative to emissions-heavy roasters that can **reduce the carbon footprint of each roasting cycle by 80%: the Bellwether Roaster.**

Switching from an older-style roaster to a Bellwether, after one year, is equal to:

- Keeping a car off the road for 60,779 miles
- Sequestering carbon with 32 acres of forest
- Turning off electricity for 4.1 homes

We created a **Sustainability Calculator** to show how much carbon you save according to (1) where you live and (2) how much coffee you go through in a week.

5. Transition to Energy-Efficient Lighting and Gear

It may not be sexy, but opting for energy-efficient equipment is an easy way to "set it and forget it" when it comes to environmental savings.

- **Toilets** — Removing toilets from the 90s or earlier and replacing them with modern, high-efficiency toilets can reduce your shop's flush-water usage anywhere from 20% to 60% (and save $100 or more annually on water costs).
- **LED Lighting** — LEDs aren't just a little more efficient than traditional fluorescent or incandescent bulbs—they're *loads* more efficient. We know those edison bulbs look snazzy in the cafe setting, but switching to LEDs for most lighting cuts energy usage by ~80% and reduces physical bulb waste.
- **Energy Star Appliances** — Energy Star is a government-operated certification with a large focus on commercial kitchen appliances and equipment. Not only does certified equipment cut energy usage by 10-50%, but you can potentially save thousands on energy bills in the process.

Don't forget to keep your gear clean to maximize its lifespan and keep minor malfunctions and inefficiencies at bay.

6. Get Creative to Minimize Food, Milk, and Coffee Waste

Restaurants in the United States generate 22 to 33 *billion* pounds of food waste each year. Most of it goes straight to landfills. *Yikes!*

It's all of our responsibility to use our food as efficiently as possible. Thankfully, there are some low-hanging fruit ways for coffee shops to play their part.

- **Save and give away used grounds.** Gardeners love using spent coffee grounds to enhance their compost or use as fertilizer. The most common method we've seen of bagging up spent grounds is inside empty 5 Lb coffee bags.
- **Take milk waste seriously.** Cow milk, according to a 2018 study, has a carbon footprint over 300% larger than non-dairy alternatives. Every ounce of wasted milk is an environmental bummer. We suggest throwing impromptu competitions to see who wastes the most milk from steaming in a shift as a

fun way to inspire better habits. You can also require baristas to weigh milk when dosing for milk drinks.

- **Track your food waste.** Whether you've got a baker's lineup or a full lunch menu, it's rare that *everything* sells. Items spoil, paninis get dropped, and some muffins are too mushy to serve. By having your team record every item that goes into the dump, you can identify which items (and employees) are creating the most food waste, then fix your purchasing or production processes to minimize those waste centers.
- **Cut last-day deals.** Bring a best practice over from the restaurant industry and create specials on items that are about to expire. That could be 40% off pastries that won't be good the next day. If you have a larger menu, it could be a special of the day where you prioritize near-expiration ingredients. Within a couple of hours of closing, you can partner with an app like Food For All to attract last-minute deal seekers.
- **Donate quality food that remains.** You can't control traffic or sales, so even the best planners end up with extra from time to time. Rather than dumping food that's reached its end in the dump, we suggest partnering with a local organization that can take the reins of distributing the food in a way that's helpful for the community. Before you make unsolicited donations, call up a few organizations first to make sure they can handle your extra food.

Implement a few of these practices, and your employees will notice they're taking out far less trash than normal. Win-win!

7. Go Plastic Neutral. Yes, It's Possible!

Our friends at Amavida Coffee are a model for pushing the boundaries of sustainable coffee shop operations, and in 2020 they pushed a big one: *they're now Certified Plastic Neutral*.

Amavida worked with rePurpose Global to measure plastic waste from their cafes and roastery, then calculate their carbon footprint. They were able to discover how much plastic they generate after all their reduce, reuse, and recycle initiatives.

Amavida offsets the remaining plastic waste by funding the recovery of the same amount of plastic from the environment. The Plastic Neutral certification

ensures that 100% of Amavida's plastic output is either recycled or recovered.

We applaud Amavida's initiative. They're proof that plastic neutrality isn't a pipe dream for the coffee industry.

8. Create a Culture of Conscious Coffee Among Your Customers

Environmentally-minded adjustments to your operations and menu will be noticed by customers, especially regulars. We suggest using that to your advantage.

Be open and honest about your carbon footprint with customers, and thoughtfully explain why you're making these changes.

When you invite mission-aligned customers to join you on this journey—even if it means increasing drink prices slightly—most will happily join you. Any small number of customers you lose will be replaced by new, like-minded customers who are attracted to your boldness.

We suggest getting the word out a handful of ways:

- Create social media posts explaining specific decisions
- Write an article outlining your Earth-friendly mission
- Create sustainability reports to show your progress (like this one)
- Send updates of your progress to local publications and news outlets for PR

Just like how it's important to encourage a culture of sustainability among your business partners and suppliers, it's equally important to nurture that culture among customers as well.

As long as you're authentic in your mission and honest about the steps you take, you can leverage these strategies in your marketing effectively without it actually feeling like marketing—it will just feel like a natural extension of your brand and values (as all marketing should feel!).

The Complete Guide to Setting Up Your Coffee Ecommerce Store.

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This article will guide you through the process of setting your online store and successfully sell coffee online.

According to the Square x SCA Coffee Report that debuted in May 2020, coffee shops that pivoted to some form of ecommerce marketplace saw an 11% increase in coffee equipment sales and a 109% increase in subscription sales.

With the lasting effects of the global pandemic, roasters, cafes, green coffee suppliers, and others in the specialty coffee industry are all turning to ecommerce solutions as a long-term revenue stream.

Before you dive headfirst, we'll tell you everything you need to know to successfully sell coffee online (plus ecommerce advice from roasters and coffee shops across the world!)

Fortunately, it's easier than ever for coffee businesses to join the ecommerce game. You just need to make a few critical decisions first.

Throughout our guide to coffee ecommerce, we'll show you:

- The top 5 ecommerce platforms to choose from
- How to develop and define your roasting and fulfillment operation processes
- Practical ways to create a memorable online customer experience

Up first, let's dig into **why coffee companies should launch an ecommerce shop**.

3 Major Upsides of Launching a Coffee Ecommerce Store

In comparison to investing in a physical location, equipment, and labor, taking the ecommerce route provides coffee businesses with three prominent benefits:

- **Additional Revenue Stream** – For established cafes and roasters, an ecommerce shop serves as another powerful revenue stream that can be used to support other areas of your business. It's no secret that in-person retail stores are struggling and a steady stream of additional income is always helpful.
- **No Geographic Barrier** – When you sell coffee online, customers from all over the world can buy your beans, but you also give existing customers who are quarantined or who live in other cities access to your brand. You're not limited to only those within your immediate geographic region who regularly visit your shop, *meaning the sky's the limit when it comes to selling your coffee online!*
- **Total Experience Control** – Unlike a wholesale or grocery store relationship, roasters and cafes have full control over the entire ecommerce experience—*from defining margins and optimizing the checkout process to consistent branding.*

Selecting An Ecommerce Platform: Shopify, Squarespace, and Beyond

The most important part of setting up an ecommerce coffee store is selecting the right technology—this decision will impact how you create customer experiences moving forward, so it's important to make it mindfully.

There are dozens of ecommerce platforms to choose from, but these five options lead the market due to their features, pricing, and other integrations.

Shopify

- **What It Is**: A full-service, hosted ecommerce platform offering solutions from concept to launch
- **Who It's Best For**: New & existing coffee professionals looking for a full-fledged ecommerce platform with powerful features to facilitate long-term growth

- **Top Features**: Modern website templates, multiple sales channels, and an app marketplace for full customization
- **Pricing**: Free trial for 14 days, lowest plan starts at $29/month

Shopify is used universally by all sorts of businesses looking to sell online. You can build out entire online shopping sites using the platform or connect Shopify's back-end to an existing website using the "Buy Button" feature.

Additionally, Shopify offers a suite of POS, printing, and other fulfillment tools, allowing cafes and roasters to sell coffee in-store and online seamlessly.

Shopify is a **hosted ecommerce solution**, meaning you don't have to pay for website hosting, install software, or rely on a website design firm to launch an online store.

One major drawback to Shopify is the lack of a drag-and-drop builder. This means you may need to tinker around with the website or seek professional assistance to ensure your website looks and functions as you wish. You will also need to pay extra to add more functionality via third-party apps, like monthly subscriptions.

Squarespace

- **What It Is**: Website builder platform with ecommerce functionality
- **Who It's Best For**: Coffee companies looking for a heavily visual storefront with minimal bells and whistles
- **Top Features**: Best website templates, Square integration, sales & analytics tools
- **Pricing**: Lowest plan starts at $26/month

Squarespace is primarily known as a versatile drag-and-drop website builder. Also a hosted solution, Squarespace enables coffee businesses to acquire a domain name, build a stunning website with ecommerce functionality, and manage inventory all in one platform.

Out of all the website builders and ecommerce solutions available to coffee pros, Squarespace is known for having the top designs and layouts. Plus, the site's drag-and-drop functionality is fairly easy to figure out.

One major complaint about Squarespace is the lack of an app marketplace or additional customizations. This means that you're stuck withSquarespace's base functionality and cannot connect third-party apps for a better solution or different use.

However, for roasters and cafes looking for an all-in-one and simply managed ecommerce option, Squarespace is an excellent choice.

Square Online

- **What It Is**: Coffee shop POS system with minimal ecommerce functionality
- **Who It's Best For**: Coffee roasters & cafes already using Square in-store who want to dip their toes in the ecommerce water
- **Top Features**: Integrates with external sales channels like Facebook and Instagram, Online ordering tools
- **Pricing**: 2.9% + 30¢ per transaction. No monthly fee.

Square is often the POS system of choice for coffee shops and roasters. The company recently added ecommerce online stores to its suite of offerings. If your coffee business already uses Square in-store, it's worth looking into their ecommerce platform for fully connected sales benefits.

With Square, your online store and POS can be connected for full inventory management, total reporting, and online coffee/food ordering. Square also offers marketing features ranging from email marketing to paid ads for both in-store and online operations.

Unlike other website builders and ecommerce platforms, Square does not charge a monthly fee to use their services. Instead, you'll be charged a *rate of 2.9% plus $0.30 per transaction*.

Square's major flaw, however, is the lack of customization. Square customers using the ecommerce tools often have a similar website layout and online ordering experience—if you want to create a unique web experience, you're out of luck here.

Weebly

- **What It Is**: Website builder with ecommerce tools powered by Square
- **Who It's Best For**: Roasters & cafes with a small product catalog
- **Top Features**: Barebones ecommerce platform with visually appealing layouts
- **Pricing**: $0-$26 per month, paid annually, with increasing levels of functionality

Weebly was recently purchased by Square, which now powers their ecommerce tools and offers in-store payment integration. The website builder offers coffee shop owners and roasters a super simple online store.

The platform is built to offer an easy-to-use back-end experience, but as a result, doesn't offer as many tools or app integrations as one may desire. However, the shipping and tax calculator is a helpful tool for first-time online stores!

WooCommerce

- **What It Is**: ecommerce plugin for WordPress websites
- **Who It's Best For**: Coffee shops and roasters using an existing WordPress website
- **Top Features**: 100% customizable with extensions, multiple payment options, and a mobile app
- **Pricing**: Free plugin

WooCommerce is a free, open-source ecommerce plugin for WordPress websites. This versatile and fully customizable plugin offers a wealth of ecommerce options and benefits for coffee pros looking to launch an online store.

Whether you want to offer coffee subscriptions or allow customers to book roasting classes with you, it's possible on WooCommerce (though you might need to pay extra for additional plugins with specific functions, like subscriptions).

However, **WooCommerce only works on WordPress websites**. This means that while the plugin is free, you must already have an existing WordPress website or be in the process of building one.

As a result, you'll be required to pay extra for:

- Domain name (URL)
- Website hosting
- SEO plugins/services
- Marketing and advertising tools
- Website security

Many of these costs are included in self-hosted website builders like Squarespace and Shopify. But, a plus side is that you can control your monthly costs. Some business owners prefer to have complete control while others want an all-in-one solution.

3 Quick Considerations When Choosing an Ecommerce Platform

Before you make your decision, keep these thoughts in mind...

- **Look for Software that Integrates with Your Existing Set-Up** – If you're already in business, have existing SOPs and workflows for how you roast and manage orders. You'll want to find platforms that integrate with your current website and in-store processes. Otherwise, you'll find yourself trying to reinvent the wheel and transferring data over to a new website platform—*aka, a headache you'd rather avoid.*

- **Be Future Oriented** – Be sure to read through **exactly what you get** with each website builder subscription level. The zero up-front cost of a Square Online store might look great now, but it could hold you back in the future when you want more functionality. Be mindful of your short and long-term goals so you can budget and scale accordingly.

- **Operational Hardware Needs** – Many ecommerce sites like Shopify and Square offer operational hardware for a one-time or additional monthly cost, such as label printers. If you plan to have a retail operation that's perfectly in-sync with your online store under one platform, these tools can come in handy!

3 Steps for Developing a Roasting & Fulfillment Process

After you've chosen an ecommerce platform, set up products and inventory, and launched, now comes the hard work—**roasting and fulfillment.** Let's explore some ways you can create a roasting/fulfillment process that everyone in your organization can follow.

1. Evaluate Your Existing Roasting Schedule

Examine your existing schedule and determine how this will change (*if at all*) with the addition of an online store. **Your roasting schedule will set the foundation for the remainder of your fulfillment processes.**

If you're launching a brand new business, it's best to set your roast schedule around green coffee inventory and order volume. As your business grows, this may be adjusted to meet demand.

2. Define Fulfillment Processes Around Roasting Schedule

It's time to ask yourself the following questions:

- Will I only fulfill orders on specific days of the week?
- Do I want to compete on fast turnaround times?
- What will set my fulfillment process apart from the competition

Typically, a coffee fulfillment process looks something like this:

1. Customer places order
2. Order is accepted by the ecommerce system
3. Coffee is roasted and bagged
4. Coffee is packaged and shipped

If you don't plan to roast on-demand in small batches, you can dedicate certain days of the week to order fulfillment and the remainder to roasting. The key is to be consistent and to communicate this on your website so customers know when to expect their coffee.

3. Document the Process

After you've confirmed your roasting and fulfillment processes and feel comfortable executing them consistently, document it. Having a defined and accessible process ensures that everyone on your team understands how ecommerce fulfillment works and can jump in when necessary.

If you're roasting on a Bellwether, even baristas can fulfill orders throughout the day.

Shipping Your Coffee: Solving the Operational Nightmare

We asked dozens of coffee roasters what their biggest operational challenge is, and nine times out of 10, **shipping** was the answer.

Shipping costs, materials, and processes need to be a major focus when developing your fulfillment systems.

Shipping costs will vary based on your pricing structure and location. In coffee, we often use these common cost structures:

- Free shipping
- Flat fee shipping
- Dynamic/variable shipping

In our experience, most roasters charge a $5 flat fee and take a small loss on the cost of shipping ($8 to ship a padded flat rate envelope, for example), but preferences vary. It may take some trial and error to discover which method works best for your business.

Most ecommerce platforms offer discounted rates on shipping labels, too! But, feel free to shop around third-party shipping apps—*if they integrate with your ecommerce tool—*to see if you can get a better rate. Roasters in our network speak highly of netParcel, Shipstation, and Pirate Ship.

High shipping costs are among the top reasons for cart abandonment, so we strongly suggest leveraging a lower flat rate.

Creating a Loyalty-Generating Customer Experience

Deciding to launch an ecommerce coffee business can be nerve-wracking. With so many other roasters and cafes competing in the ecommerce space, what will set your brand apart?

The customer experience.

In the marketing psychology world, it's well-established that your customer experience—*not your products*—is the #1 way brands stand out in 2021 and beyond. Building emotional connections with customers is not optional.

With this in mind, look for ways to inject your brand personality throughout the website. This can be in the form of website and product copy or personalized order tracking emails. Help visitors connect with your brand as if they're in your coffee shop.

Here are a few great ways to do that:

- **Focusing on simplicity** – The more hoops your customers have to jump through to order, the more customers will drop off before making a sale. Make ordering coffee from your ecommerce store as seamless and simple as possible through things like straightforward product options (grind size, quantity, etc), clear product descriptions, and a big clean "Buy Now" button.
- **Sell the experience more than the product** – Customers know what you sell. Great coffee, right? *But why should they buy from you?* Sell the experience instead of the product. This can include handwritten notes in each order box, individualized follow-up emails, and surprise gifts in orders—*it's up to you to curate and create a unique shopping experience.*

Customers who engage emotionally are 52% more valuable than the average customer because they spend more and buy more frequently. Give your customers the essential information they need to make an informed decision *and* the emotion-driven background that helps them feel a bond with your brand and mission.

Launching an Ecommerce Coffee Business Has Never Been Easier

It may seem overwhelming, but launching an online coffee store is quite simple. Start by:

- Picking and building out your ecommerce platform
- Defining a roasting and fulfillment process
- Creating a unique brand experience for customers

Of course, the most important part is the coffee!

Previously, learning to roast coffee and investing in a roaster was the biggest hurdle for new and existing coffee pros alike. **Bellwether Coffee has eliminated that barrier with our first-of-its-kind commercial coffee roaster**.

We've combined the best elements of traditional roasting with the technology of today to make it possible for everyone to roast coffee, from long-time coffee shop owners to ecommerce startups.

The Roaster's Guide to Coffee Packaging

Source: Bellwether Coffee, https://help.bellwethercoffee.com/the-roasters-guide-to-coffee-packaging-bellwether-coffee. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

From bags, valves, designs, printing, and stickers; coffee packaging can feel like a big mess! Learn more about coffee bag packaging & design.

When shopping for coffee, consumers consider everything from the roast level to the brand's location.

But the most influential factor? **Coffee bag design and packaging.** 70% of consumers report that packaging design has a major influence on their decision to buy a product. Researchers tend to give packaging anywhere from 30 to 90 percent of the credit for a customer's purchasing decision.

Whether you're selling your coffee in grocery stores, your shop, or online, your coffee bag design is one of the most meaningful interactions a person has with your brand. Not only does your coffee packaging design help raise brand awareness, it also helps your coffee business stand out from the crowd and attract more coffee lovers and customers.

In our guide, we'll show you everything you need to know about designing your coffee bags, including:

- 3 components your coffee packaging needs for quality, freshness, and compliance
- The 4 important packaging decisions every roaster must make
- How to create a coffee bag design that sells

By the time you're done reading, you'll be fully prepared to start developing your coffee brand's coffee bags.

3 Components Your Coffee Packaging Must Have

At a bare minimum, we suggest your bags include the following components:

- **One-Way Valve:** To maintain peak freshness and allow the coffee to degas, your coffee bag design must include a one-way valve. This valve lets CO2 escape and prevents oxygen from getting in. Today's coffee lovers know to look for this valve and will pass on a coffee if it is not part of the packaging.
- **Resealing Capabilities**: Coffee exposed to oxygen for a long time becomes muted in flavors and characteristics. Help customers keep their coffee fresh and flavorful by including a convenient way to reseal the coffee bag. This can include a ziplock zipper, a tin tie, or other creative solution.
- **Local Legal Requirements**: Check with your local health department to see if they have specific packaging and/or labeling requirements. For example, in Connecticut, coffee roasters must include the product name/type, product net weight/volume, and address with a zip code on their bag.

None of these components are negotiable. You must include all three to sell the freshest-*and law abiding*-coffee around.

4 Packaging Decisions Every Coffee Roaster Must Make

There are *so many* creative and useful coffee packaging options available to roasters today. From bags with windows to display the coffee beans to beautifully designed five-pound flat bottom bags, the sky's the limit!

To find the best coffee packaging for your budget, coffee, and brand, you'll have to make four important decisions:

1. Packaging Type

Your first decision will guide the rest: **what type of coffee packaging do you want?**

There are four main options:

Gusseted Bags

Gusset bags were more common in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but can still be seen on shelves today. Older Starbucks bags are a great example of this structure.

While these bags are *affordable*, the smaller top tends to be a nuisance for roasters when filling with coffee.

Flat Bottom Bags

Flat bottom bags are growing in popularity among coffee roasters. Their sturdy design makes filling them a breeze, offers more design opportunities with five visible sides, and makes storage easier for customers. Some manufacturers also let roasters include a design on the inside of the bags.

However, due to the enhanced customization options available, flat bottom coffee bags tend to be more expensive (nailing that customer experience isn't cheap!).

Stand Up Pouch

Another classic coffee bag structure, the stand up pouch is a common choice among roasters. Think of stand up pouches as the middle ground between functionality, design, and cost.Methodical Coffee and Passenger Coffee's bag designs are excellent examples of this bag in action.

With your choice of materials and customizations, like the convenient tear-away top, stand up pouches are a great option for new roasters looking for an affordable and attractive bag design.

Flat Pouches

Flat pouch bags are your typical two-sided bags, often found in hotel rooms or as single-serve Steeped Coffee products.

These bags are available in smaller sizes. However, if you're looking to stand out online or in a grocery store, offering single-serve coffee options in a flat pouch can be beneficial.

Alternative Coffee Packaging

Many roasters decide to use creative packaging choices like jars and boxes to help their coffee stand out.

Of course, by taking this route, you may run into challenges like:

- Difficulty sourcing the right packaging materials consistently
- Creating a custom design to oddly-shaped packages
- Sticking to a budget-the more creative, the more costly

Carefully look through your budget and weigh your options to decide if alternative packaging is a viable choice for your company goals.

2. What Packaging Materials/Substrates Should You Choose?

When it comes to designing coffee packaging, there are two common materials (*also known as substrates*): **kraft and matte.**

Kraft bags are your classic brown-ish paper bags. They're low-fi, simple, and tend to have a handmade vibe. Matte bags come in every color imaginable and are often the choice of established roasters who want to go all-out on a full bag design.

Each material has advantages and disadvantages:

Kraft Bags	Matte Bags
Pros:	**Pros:**
Most affordable coffee packaging material	Endless customization and artwork capabilities including holographic or metallic elements, hot stamping, and varying color palettes.
Can buy larger quantities without breaking the bank	Made from multiple layers to ensure coffee freshness and shelf life

Kraft Bags	Matte Bags
Ideal for those specializing in wholesale and subscriptions	Many manufacturers offer recyclable or green matte packaging options
100% natural, biodegradable, and compostable.	Appeal to a wide audience
Cons:	**Cons:**
Will need to purchase additional stamps, stickers, or labels to customize the bag design	More expensive than generic kraft bags
May not appeal to a more “upscale” clientele	Order quantities will depend on bag design, size, and structure
	Requires a film of aluminum to protect coffee, which can be a detriment to those valuing sustainability

Sustainability: A Major Materials Consideration

One McKinsey study found that more than half of US consumers are highly concerned about the environmental impact of product packaging.

Ironically, when asked about their purchase decision factors, environmentally-conscious packaging was rated as the least important consideration. Yet, the report also noted that **60-70% of consumers also stated they were willing to pay higher prices** for products packaged in sustainable or recyclable materials.

In other words, customers don’t find sustainable packaging to be *essential*, but they find it *beneficial* enough to pay extra for. If your customers are highly concerned about the environment and value sustainability, opt for materials such as:

- Kraft paper
- Rice paper
- Sustainable inks
- Low-density polyethylene (100% recyclable materials)

Some manufacturers also offer a “Zero Waste” option, where roasters can return used coffee bags to be properly recycled, but this typically only applies to bags that are used in-house, since most of your customers won’t bring empty bags back to you.

3. Bag Size

The size of your coffee bag will influence future decisions such as product pricing, design opportunities, and retail space availability.

Common size options include:

- 8 oz
- 10 oz
- 12 oz
- 1 lb
- 2 lb
- 5 lb

12 ounce and 5 pound bags are the most frequently used bags for coffee in North America, meaning they’ll likely be available at a more affordable price*.* Keep in mind, custom sizes will require a custom quote.

We recommend choosing a bag size that fits your business model. For instance, wholesale coffee roasters will need to purchase 5 pound bags as well as typical 12 ounce or 1 pound retail bags to sell to clients.

Or, if you’re running a high-end subscription service specializing in rare coffees, an 8 ounce bag may suit you just fine.

4. Manufacturer

Once you have a framework of what type and size of coffee packaging you’ll need, the next step is to find a manufacturer who can meet your needs. Among the many manufacturers specializing in coffee bag designs and packaging are:

- MTPak

- Roastar
- Savor Brands
- North Atlantic Specialty Bag

Aside from offering the type of coffee bags you'd like, keep these factors in mind when vetting a possible manufacturer.

- **Minimum Order Quantities (MOQ)** - Each manufacturer has a minimum order quantity for their products. Some offer low quantities such as 100-1,000 bags while others require 10,000+. One way roasters accommodate large MOQs is by using a single bag design for all coffees. Each bag then receives a label, sticker, or tag with information specific to each coffee

- **Turnaround Times** - Due to the global pandemic, turnaround times at coffee packaging manufacturers around the globe are staggering or delayed, especially if shipments are being sent overseas. Be prepared to wait several weeks, if not months, for your bags to arrive. If you need your bags ASAP, a rush or expedited fee will apply.

- **Budget** - After speaking with the manufacturer about design options and MOQs, take a look at what the price per bag is. Does this price point fit into your budget? Will you need to raise the prices of your coffee to cover the cost of the bags? Is there a lower price available for a higher order quantity?

Pro Tip:**Ask what discounts are available. The answer is always "No" until you ask!*

Most importantly, **always ask for design proofs**.

Thoroughly review these proofs for any mistakes or misinformation. Have multiple people do so, too. There is nothing more frustrating than paying for thousands of bags only to notice a design or copy flaw once production is complete.

It's well worth the small proofs fee to avoid a potential and expensive printing disaster.

After you've found the right manufacturer for your coffee bags, it's time to move on to the fun part: **design**.

How to Design a Coffee Bag that Sells

When customers shop online or at the grocery store for coffee, they don't know what your coffee tastes like. They will likely make their decision solely based on the bag design and information available to them.

Your coffee bag needs to stand out by telling your story through clear copy and captivating design concepts.

Clear Brand Messaging & Coffee Information

Today's coffee bag trends range from plain designs to quirky illustrations like atLittle Wolf Coffee. While the design catches the eye of the consumer, the bag copywriting (the written part) will seal the deal.

*1 in 4 consumers state they **always** read the label when shopping.* This is the perfect opportunity to sell them on your company and coffee.

Your bag should include authentic messaging that explains:

- **Who you are.** Include company information such as your logo, website, and location.
- **What you do.** Are you a coffee roaster? Do you own a coffee shop(s)? Do you specialize in a particular type of coffee? Tell potential customers exactly what they need to know about your business.
- **What you stand for.** For many companies, their philanthropic, social, or personal beliefs are what drive the brand. If this aligns with your company values, make sure your ethos and mission are clearly stated on the bag so you can stand out in the mind of the customer. Generic beans from generic brands don't sell well.

Make sure the bag communicates important coffee details too. *Admittedly, this is the tricky part.* Deciding what coffee information to include will depend on your brand and your consumers.

For instance, does your audience care about the altitude the coffee bean was grown at or the specific certifications the farm may have? Or, are they more concerned

about flavor notes and roast level?

At the bare minimum, be sure to include:

- Coffee/Origin Name
- Roast Date
- Tasting Notes
- Roast Level

Bag Design that Captures Customer's Attention

All of your packaging decisions lead you to the final step: **the design.**

The bag design must accomplish several objectives:

- Capture the customer's attention in-store and online
- Align with your brand standards and mission
- Convince the customer to purchase your coffee

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Shorr Packaging Corp discovered that almost half of customers have purchased products they were previously unfamiliar with, solely due to packaging design and copy.

Some of the successful coffee packaging design trends we've seen recently are story driven packaging, organic elements, typography led design, and holograph effect packaging.

As you design your coffee bags, consider the following:

- **Product Placement** - Will your bag be sold in retail or grocery stores? If so, it needs to stand out from the competition. Use colors, illustrations, and shapes that align with your brand, but also catch the eye of passersby.

- **Color Psychology** - As humans, we associate colors with certain principles or meanings. For instance, when we see green product packaging, we think of concepts like all-natural, eco-friendly, recyclable, and even healthy eating. Think about what colors will resonate with your target market and communicate your brand message.

- **Brand Image** - No matter if you choose a flashy look or a minimalist design, it must be true to your brand image. Customers will be able to see through the fluff and gimmicks! Don't force a design that doesn't make sense for your brand just to be "trendy."

In the end, slick design will win over customers at first, but it's not a moat to build a business on. Make sure to infuse your design with mission, narrative, and values to give those first-time customers a compelling reason to choose you a second time.

Inspiring Coffee Packaging Examples

Onyx Coffee Lab

As the2021 SCA Design in Coffee winner, Onyx Coffee Lab's new packaging design is an inspiration for roasters everywhere. Intending to communicate coffee quality and expertise, Onyx took an unexpected route and used texture, jewel tones, and embossing to their advantage. The boxes are also an elegant touch, as they reveal a matching-yet simple-bag design inside.

You can't help but be entranced by Onyx Coffee Lab's packaging choices!

J.René Coffee Roasters

With a constantly changing lineup of single origin coffees, producing a new bag design for each new offering is not always a sustainable option.J.René Coffee Roasters tackled this challenge by developing a single bag design that leverages a separate tag to communicate relevant coffee information.

An unexpected benefit to this design choice is that customers save the tags so they can remember which coffees they enjoyed and purchase again.

Felix Roasting Co.

Known for their unbelievably beautiful NYC coffee shops,Felix Roasting Co. extends this sophisticated brand image to their coffee packaging. From whimsically

designed coffee pouches to bespoke coffee tins, there's no denying this packaging design catches your attention!

This approach not only encapsulates the brand's personality and image but also relays the high quality of the coffee inside.

Boomtown Coffee

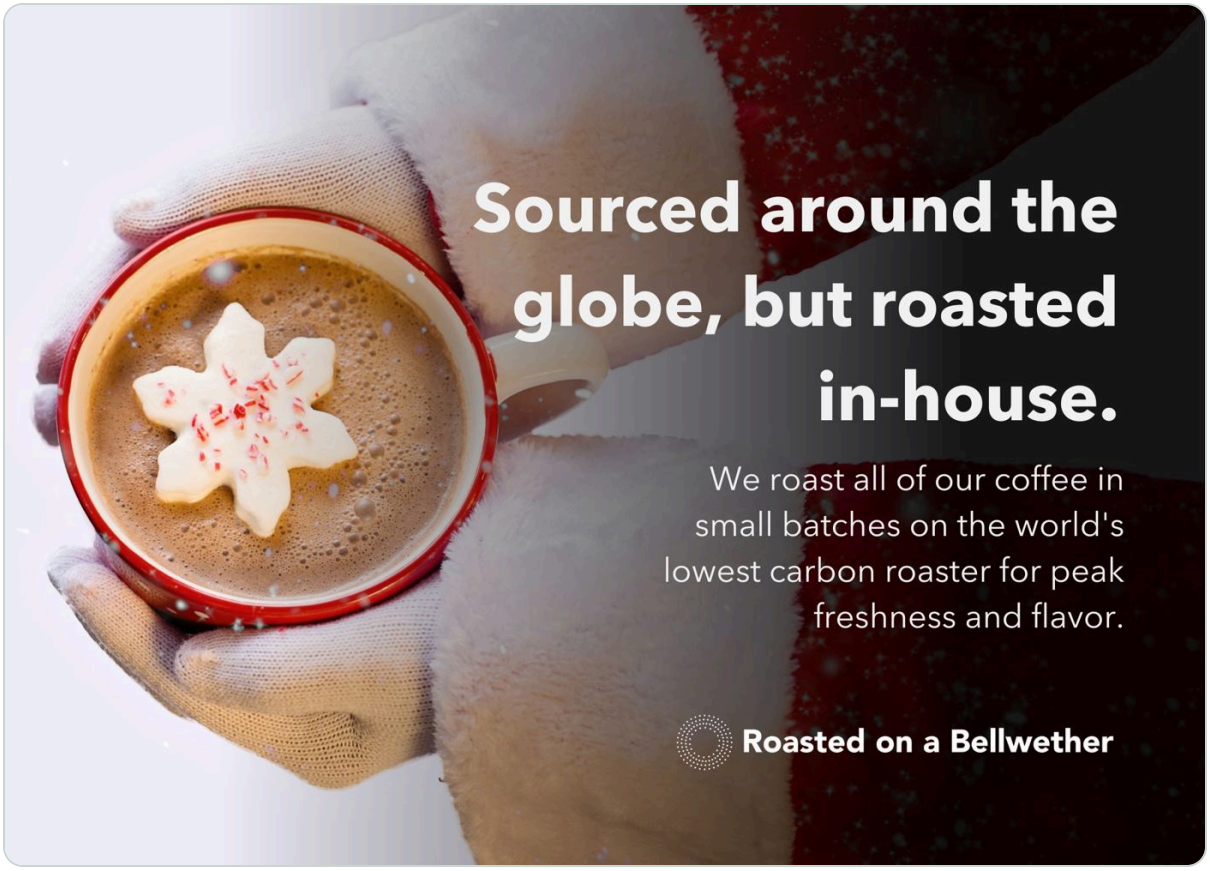
Boomtown Coffee takes coffee packaging to the next level. Each beautiful bag design also contains an informational insert and sleeve. As you interact with each component of the design, more artwork or coffee information appears. Plus, there are more fun surprises inside (*aside from the expertly roasted coffee*) once you open the bag!

The Winter Guide to Seasonal Coffee Shop Success

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The winter season is arguably the busiest time of year for coffee shops. As customers travel home to celebrate the holidays with friends and family, they'll come to your shop to warm up, grab a drink and a bite to eat, and enjoy a conversation.



Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

Adding to the influx of seasonal customers is the need to capitalize on holiday trends, execute timely shopping promotions, and streamline internal operations all at the same time. And don't forget about preparing for the new year!

It's no wonder many coffee businesses find the holidays to be challenging.

We've put together a guide to help you thoroughly prepare for the holiday season and drive sales well into the new year.

In this guide, you'll learn:

- How to plan for holiday shopping promotions like Black Friday and Cyber Monday
- The best way to create a seasonal coffee blend that excites customers and drive sales
- How to prepare your staff for increased holiday traffic

By the end, you'll be ready to tackle the holiday season with confidence.

Holiday Sales: Plan Early and Be Prepared

The winter months are synonymous with shopping. From Black Friday midnight "doorbuster" deals to significant online discounts on Cyber Monday, customers have grown accustomed to businesses running holiday shopping promotions.

If your local competition and the big brand shops are offering large holiday discounts, you may feel pressure to join them. But keep in mind: it's not a requirement.

There's no rule saying you have to offer a "Buy 1, Get 1" deal on drip coffees the day after Thanksgiving.

However, for coffee businesses that run an e-commerce shop, operate a roastery, or sell merchandise, seasonal shopping promotions can be a great way to drive sales online and in-store.

Among the most common online promotions are:

- A set percentage or dollar amount off every purchase
- Buy one, get one 50% off
- Free shipping
- Complimentary gifts with every order

If you're shipping coffee by mail, make sure to check out the holiday schedule of your carrier: USPS, UPS, FedEx.

Coffee shops can also run in-store promotions to "caffeinate holiday shoppers." Consider offering discounts to those who place an online pick-up order on Black Friday. Or, run a free gift promotion for your loyalty program customers.

If you're not comfortable discounting your products, there are tactics you can use to drive holiday revenue, too. Selling exclusive merchandise lines, rare coffees, and new seasonal menu items are all a great way to generate buzz throughout the season.

The trick to holiday promotions is to focus on creating value for *your customers***.** It's tempting to copy the sales and campaigns your competition is running, but these offers may not make sense for your business or customer needs.

Once you know what promotions you plan to run, it's time to prepare!

Be sure to have all aspects of your sale ready in advance, including:

- Printing in-store signage
- Updating the POS system
- Sending email marketing newsletters
- Crafting and scheduling social media posts
- Training staff on promotion details

Take advantage of scheduling features on platforms like Shopify, Facebook, and Mailchimp to automate your holiday promotional efforts. It'll be one less thing for you to worry about throughout the winter!

Roasting Holiday and Winter Blends

Holiday blends tend to sell exceptionally well during the winter months. Seasonal blends make great gifts for the coffee lover in every shopper's life. These unique blends are especially beloved by customers who are brand-loyal and who might find these coffees a better signal of their affection for your brand than single origins.

Source and blend coffees with notes that remind you of the holiday season, like:

Almond	Cherry	Ginger
Nutmeg	Milk Chocolate	Toffee
Cinnamon	Pine	Cedar

Of course, give yourself time to execute on these new blends. You'll need a few weeks to source the coffee, fine-tune your blends, and ensure delivery of holiday bags and labels.

⭐ With a Bellwether roaster, there's no need to spend precious time sourcing and dialing in new coffees, meaning you have more time on your hands to focus on other seasonal tasks. Our Green Coffee Marketplace has a wide variety of intriguing new green coffees—along with expertly crafted roast profiles—that'll make the perfect addition to any holiday coffee menu.

This holiday season and all year long, your coffee focus should be on quality, not quantity.

Boost Sales with Holiday Fairs

People show up to holiday and craft fairs ready to buy, and they can be a great place to boost year-end sales. These range from small get-togethers in community centers and churches to massive events in civic centers and event halls—the bigger the show, the more you'll have to pay for your spot.

Giving Back: An Opportunity to Reinvest in Your Community

The holidays are a great time to follow-through on your mission if you have an element of community investment or giving back via donations to local charities

that align with your values. It's also a great way to involve your customers in a united goal that nurtures relationships, long-term loyalty, and higher spend.

We've seen a handful of things work well:

- In-store coat / clothing donation drives
- Limited-edition drinks and retail bags that send a portion of revenue to charity
- Partner fundraisers where mentioning a non-profit gets a portion of revenue donated
- Committing to serving Verified Living Income coffee beans

As always, communicate clearly about partnerships and how the give-backs are distributed.

Cheers to Conquering the January Sales Slump

While it's important to set goals and plan for the new year, you also need to think about how you'll conquer the January sales slump.

Coffee shop customers notoriously disappear at the beginning of every year. (*Don't worry, they'll return!*)

As in-store and online sales take a slight nosedive during this time, business owners need a strategy in place to recoup the decline in revenue.

Many coffee business owners explore tactics like:

- **Online sales promotions** — Encourage customers to kick-off the new year with freshly roasted coffee purchased online and delivered to their door. You can even run an extreme discount on old merchandise inventory if you have any items remaining after the holiday rush.
- **Loyalty programs** — January is a wonderful time to launch an in-store loyalty program or remind customers of an existing one. This encourages customers to come back again and again for delicious drinks, foods, and ultimately, rewards.
- **New coffee offerings** — Whether you opt for a single origin coffee you've never offered before or a new blend, adding a new coffee to your lineup is a

great way to draw attention to your business.

Others take a different approach and use January as a “reset” month. Some business owners even opt to close up shop for a week and give employees some much-needed rest.

You can also use this time to spruce up the interior of your store or make any equipment repairs and upgrades leading into the new year.

When January arrives, don’t become dismayed over the small decline in sales. It happens to all of us! Instead, use the time to reset and recharge for the year ahead.

A Recap of the Winter Calendar

October	November	December	January	February
Plan Black Friday offers	Black Friday	Holiday / gift offers launch	Holiday blend last call	Plan Spring drinks / events
Plan holiday / gift offers	Holiday / gift fairs and events	Holiday / gift fairs and events	Online sales and promotions	
	Holiday blend release	Giveback drink / event launch	Loyalty program refresh	
	Schedule / hire for holiday hours	Holiday shopping last call	New year goal-setting	

New Year, New Growth Opportunities

Use January to map out your goals for the year, if you haven’t already.

New coffee shop goals can include:

- Increasing sales by 10% each quarter
- Adding new items to your menu
- Launching an ecommerce store and subscription program
- Developing a wholesale revenue stream

Set specific and realistic goals for the best chance of success! **And, making the switch to roasting in-house will help you get there.**

With a Bellwether Roaster, you'll be roasting your own coffee in a matter of days, not months. Our electric roaster comes with pre-programmed roast profiles, custom settings, and access to a marketplace of responsibly sourced coffees—everything you need to make next year your best year.

Verified Living Income: A New Green Coffee Pricing Model for Sustainable Sourcing

Source: Bellwether Coffee, https://help.bellwethercoffee.com/verified-living-income-a-new-green-coffee-pricing-model-for-sustainable-sourcing. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

The coffee industry has an enduring poverty crisis that, despite decades of various interventions and initiatives, doesn't seem to be letting up—at least, not at scale. As many as 80% of the world's coffee producers live below the poverty line, and farmers receive significantly less money per pound of coffee than they did thirty years ago.

Our existing standards for pricing coffee don't work for farmers. It's past-time to try something new.

We partnered with stakeholders across the supply chain to develop a new methodology for pricing green coffee that's based on real-world living income benchmark data.

Verified Living Income (VLI) is a context-specific methodology for determining minimum green coffee prices based on the coffee farmers' livelihood needs in a local area.

The implications of this methodology are significant, so in this article, we're breaking down the methodology, pilot study, and results. We'll cover things like:

- How VLI is different from existing pricing structures
- Why meeting the cost of production doesn't come close to a truly sustainable price
- Next steps for coffee companies who want to live out their values

For complete details on the study methodology, limitations, and recommendations for determining a Verified Living Income in new contexts, see the VLI Whitepaper.

What is Verified Living Income?

Existing pricing structures are generally based on supply and demand (C-market), the cost of production, or a guaranteed minimum price.

Verified Living Income focuses on what it takes to make coffee economically viable for the *people* **behind the farms by closing the living income gap**. The context-specific living income data makes VLI the first truly farmer-centric and economically ethical way to source coffee that is firmly grounded in realities at origin.

We partnered with organizations across the supply chain to run a pilot study with a cooperative located in Tolima, Colombia. Our partners included: Heifer International, Sustainable Harvest, The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC), and the Asociación de Productores Agropecuarios de Café Especial de Planadas (ASOPEP).

Here's how it works: data on the cost of production, land size, and farm productivity is collected with the help of stakeholders throughout the supply chain, then overlaid with the local **Living Income Benchmark** to identify the minimum price that should be paid for green coffee to achieve a price that enables producers to thrive, not just survive.

Heifer International is the non-profit behind the Living Income Benchmark metric. Their award-winning methodology helps projects like this use accurate local data to identify fair costs for all kinds of agricultural goods.

Some of the inputs for the Living Income Benchmark include:

- Nutritious, culturally-appropriate diet
- Decent housing based on local needs and expectations
- The cost of other basic needs, like healthcare, transportation, clothing, and education
- Minimum savings to withstand unexpected shocks and expenses

The result is a green coffee price that's fair and sustainable for producers over the long-term, and doesn't rely on philanthropic projects, charity, or other initiatives that fail to tackle the root problem of under-priced coffee.

There are a few key differences to other pricing methodologies:

- **It's completely decoupled from financial markets.** Supply and demand are not part of the price discovery process. The C-market is disregarded completely.
- **Living income or bust.** The entire methodology is based around providing a local living income. If we're not doing at least that, we're still perpetuating the structures that keep millions in poverty.
- **Giving producers agency to determine their future.** Producers must be part of the process to evaluate costs of production, which elevates business acumen and offers an opportunity for meaningful inclusion in the price-setting process.

The resulting Verified Living Income price can only be applied to settings where the data is collected from. In other words, it's a process that must occur for every partner cooperative and refreshed every few years to ensure the price remains reflective of a true living income.

Results from The Pilot Study: Tolima, Colombia

We worked with 38 smallholder farmers—all members of the cooperative ASOPEP in Tolima, Colombia—and partner organizations to discover a context-specific VLI price based on the following averages.

Note: The **farmgate price** represents the money producers receive at the "farm's gate" for the sale of product *before* additional transportation, milling, processing, warehousing, and other costs. **FOB** contract prices roll up all those extra expenses. For this reason, we suggest focusing on the farmgate price as the more transparent measure of what producers receive.

Averages for the Sample Size	
Local Annual Living Income Benchmark	$4,464 per person
Farm Size	3.43 hectares
Coffee Yield	2,883 lbs per hectare
Production Cost Per Hectare	$3,045
Production Cost Per Pound (Farmgate, dry parchment)	$1.06
Production Cost Per Pound (Farmgate, green equivalent)	$1.33

When we overlaid all the data, we were able to identify VLI prices for three coffee buying scenarios.

Verified Living Income Outcome: ASOPEP Speciality	
Farmgate Price (dry parchment)	$1.51
Farmgate Price (green equivalent)	$1.89
FOB Price	$2.24

This VLI pilot study concluded that the farmers of this particular cooperative need to be paid $1.89 per pound of green coffee to achieve the local Living Income Benchmark with coffee as their sole source of income (true sustainability).

Bellwether Coffee's Response: We Paid More

To our surprise, the Bellwether Coffee 2020 contract with ASOPEP—which we previously believed to be fairly priced (and Certified Fair Trade)—fell below the VLI price. To live out our values of a company that pursues true sustainability, we signed a new contract for 2021 representing a 20% price increase from the previous year's to reach the Verified Living Income price.

We're committed to following the Verified Living Income methodology for all of our producer partnerships in the future, with all partnerships in Latin American achieving a VLI price agreement by the end of 2022.

Another Benefit: Encouraging Producer Agency

One benefit of this process was giving the producers of ASOPEP the agency to participate in the price-setting process. The power dynamics of most buyer-producer relationships leave coffee farmers as “price takers” and the buyers as “price setters”. This unbalanced dynamic is a key driver of future instability, because it leaves many producers around the world vulnerable to hardship and discourages younger generations from investing in the industry.

By partnering with them to collect the necessary data on the costs of production, we witnessed farmers expand their business acumen, learn to collect and use financial data, and take ownership over their businesses in new ways that will empower them for years to come.

Implications for The Greater Coffee Industry

This pilot study confirmed that existing pricing structures for green coffee are woefully inadequate to combat the trend of unsustainability in our industry.

Until all green coffee buying starts with living income as the baseline for pricing—rather than the C-market or other global minimums—the imbalance of value in the coffee chain will not be corrected.

To create a more fair and sustainable industry, producer livelihood must be the starting point for green coffee prices. Buyers can no longer be “price setters” and producers “price takers”. This will require cooperation from stakeholders at every level of the value chain—and it can be done.

We strongly urge players across the industry to consider these recommendations:

- **For Farmers** — Consider financial management a necessary step to prosperity. Track and analyze expenses and returns, then benchmark them against household needs.
- **For Cooperatives** — Provide financial management tools to members. Support farm-level cost analysis to inform better collective bargaining. Utilize data analysis to determine necessary areas of investment. Determine and leverage VLI as a key price negotiating element in sales contracts.

- **For Importers** — Provide full transparency in all contracts and educate roasters on how FOB prices translate to farmgate prices and household income. Cultivate business acumen at the cooperative level. Build long-term relationships to minimize market uncertainty. Focus on collaborative decision-making for supporting farm improvements.
- **For Roasters** — Use farmgate prices as the starting point to set FOB prices. Embed farmer profitability into procurement. Make living income a core objective in sustainability commitments, backed by accountability. Eliminate arbitrary marketing language like “fair” and “ethical” unless clearly defined and measured.
- **For Organizations** — Incorporate living income as a key to development. Require purchase contracts as part of corporate projects with VLI-based price discovery as a prerequisite. Facilitate tracking of long-term costs of production as a standard farm management practice. Support collective bargaining through capacity building training.

We invite all stakeholders across the supply chain to pursue a truly sustainable green coffee trade by adopting and helping us improve the Verified Living Income methodology. A better, fairer industry is possible—we can get there together.

Wholesale + Retail Coffee Economics + FAQs

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When launching your coffee roasting business, understanding wholesale and retail pricing and strategy is a must! Read on to learn about our suggested best practices



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- Factory Coffee, Kalamazoo, MI

Have you ever considered selling your roasted coffee online, in-store, or setting up a wholesale coffee business? Setting up a wholesale coffee program is a great way

to utilize the full value of your roaster. Not only are you able to realize brand-new revenue from exciting channels - like online sales and subscriptions - but you also insulate your business from some risk when your retail operation is unable to operate or things are slow.

While it can seem like a big undertaking, it's fairly straightforward if you break it down into steps. Here are a few key things to consider when starting off with wholesale and e-commerce for your roasted coffee:

- **Cost and pricing**
- **Where to sell and what to expect**
- **Starting simple**

How do I determine cost and pricing for a wholesale business?

A typical wholesale coffee menu includes pricing for both 5lb bags and 12oz retail bags. Often, the 5lb bags are priced by the pound, and 12oz retail bags are priced by the bag.

Here is a typical cost breakdown for a pound of coffee that would be ready to sell to a prospective wholesale customer:

Typical Cost Breakdown for Wholesale	
Average Green Coffee Cost	$4.50
Roasting (Shrinkage 18%)	$0.72
Label	$0.75
Bag	$0.76
Box ($1.5 box /per lb)	$0.03
Shipping to Customer	$0.50
Total Cost	$7.26
Average Wholesale Price per lb	**$12.00**
Net Profit	**$4.74**
Profit Margin	**39.50%**

Here is a typical wholesale menu with both per lb for “bulk” coffee pricing, packaged in 5lb bags, and 12oz retail bags with the recommended retail price listed :

*Bulk is packaged in 5lb Bags		Wholesale	Wholesale Retail	
Current Menu	**Tasting Notes**	**Bulk Per lb**	**12oz Bag**	**RRP for 12oz bag**
The Americas				
Brazil Parceiros do Cafe	Chocolate, Caramel, Nutty	$11.50	$9.75	$16.00
Colombia, Magia del Campo	Cherry Compote, Maple, Toffee	$13.00	$11.00	$18.00
El Salvador, Lenca	Semi-Sweet Chocolate, Nectarine, Dark Brown Sugar	$12.25	$10.50	$17.25
Guatemala, Manos de Mujer	Fudge, Toffee, Plum	$12.75	$10.75	$17.50

Who to Sell to & What to Expect

Now, you’re roasting your own delicious coffee. You have bags and labels ready to go and a menu to show prospective customers and wholesale partners. What’s next? The next step is reaching out digitally or in person to let people know what you have to offer.

For help getting your store online, check out our post on A Guide to Setting up an Online Coffee Business. For help sharing your online store, check out Marketing + Community.

Aside from individual orders or subscriptions from your online store, typical wholesale coffee relationships include:

- Coffee retailers

- Restaurants
- Hotels
- Office buildings
- Your friend’s start-up
- Your community center
- And so much more!

Finally, the average US non-chain coffee company can expect to serve and sell around 100lbs of roasted coffee per week. When forming these wholesale relationships, be mindful of how much green coffee you’ll need to keep on hand. You’ll want to make sure you can keep up with roasted coffee demand!

Why Current Green Coffee Pricing Standards Don’t Work For Farmers

Source: Bellwether Coffee, https://help.bellwethercoffee.com/why-current-green-coffee-pricing-standards-dont-work-for-farmers. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co.

The coffee market is unbalanced, forcing producers to bear the burdens of outdated pricing models that leave millions in poverty.



Source: Bellwether Coffee, original article. Reproduced for owners; © Bellwether Coffee Co. Take a stroll around coffee websites, packaging, and social media, and you’re sure to encounter language like *ethical, sustainable, and fair.*It sounds great—who doesn’t want to support fair and ethical sourcing?

The problem is, the economics of coffee aren't so rosy as the buzzwords imply. Underneath the marketing language exists an industry that's working desperately to solve its greatest challenge.

The coffee market is unbalanced, forcing producers to bear the burdens of outdated pricing models that leave millions in poverty.

Despite years of sustainability-focused initiatives and PR campaigns, the situation has hardly changed. According to an SCA report in 2018, most coffee workers around the world still receive less than a living wage.

Simply put: this isn't working.

A Tale of Two Coffee Prices: Something Doesn't Add Up

Research from across the industry has confirmed over and over again that *market prices* for coffee have not risen alongside the *cost of production*. When you contrast these two metrics, it's easy to see how significant a problem this is.

Let's start with the C Market, the commodity coffee exchange where most coffee in the world is bought and sold. The c-price is the benchmark price for the delivery of green coffee that meets a bare-minimum quality grade. Oversimplified, the c-price is largely based around global supply and demand. The more green coffee produced in a year, the lower the market value and c-price. The less green coffee, the more people are willing to pay to get their hands on it.

Most market activity isn't trading coffee that exists today, however, but *coffee futures*. Futures contracts are essentially agreements to purchase a set amount of coffee (37,500 pounds) at a specific price when the contract expires. This mechanic allows end-buyers (like large-scale roasters) to buy future shipments of beans when the price is low if they expect the price to rise in the future when they need those beans. It also allows investors and speculators to buy futures low, then sell high down the road, leading to greater liquidity in the market.

Do you see what's missing from all of this?

The scandal of the C Market is that the pricing mechanics have no sense for whether a price is sustainable, or how it impacts producer livelihood.

In 2018, Caravela Coffee released a report of their findings of the cost of production across five Latin American countries: Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru, Guatemala, and El Salvador. The study concluded production costs varied widely across geographies, ranging from $1.05/lb in Nicaragua to $1.90/lb in Ecuador. The c-price, however, didn't come close to covering the cost of production for many of the producers.

When coffee prices are this unsustainably low, someone pays the price.

At the time of the study, the average producer in four of the five countries experienced a negative profit marginranging from -1.7% (Colombia) to -38.7% (Ecuador). Only Nicaragua would generate a positive profit margin of 11.4%.

The situation is similarly dire in other areas of the world. It's no surprise then that the average age of coffee farmers globally is increasing as younger workers look for greener pastures.

For an investor or trader to be able to generate a profit trading coffee futures while the producers themselves experience a loss year after year is a clear indication that value distribution in our industry is off by a wide margin, and the inevitable consequence is systemic poverty for millions of producers.

For Most Coffee Farmers, It's One Challenge After Another

On top of a pricing structure that can't keep up with regular costs, many farmers face compounding challenges to improving their communities.

- **The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season was the most destructive ever recorded.** The 17 tropical storms and 13 hurricanes that plagued Central America last year left over half a million people displaced.
- *La Roya***(coffee leaf rust) disease can decimate an entire year's crop.**From 2012 to 2017 *La Roya* was responsible for over $3 billion in damages, forcing nearly 2 million farmers off their land.

- **Climate change threatens future security.** A series of reports by SCA indicate that warming temperatures will make existing farmland unsuitable for coffee production. In Colombia, for example, nearly 30% of the current coffee farmland below 1,000 meters above sea level will have to be transitioned to other crops.

Inflation, market swings, increasing migration, lack of access to lines of credit, the coronavirus pandemic—the deck is stacked against producers in the global south.

Increasing green coffee prices to meet the cost of production, while an improvement for many producers, would still leave most farmers vulnerable to these unexpected environmental and market factors out of their control.

Why Recent Interventions and Certifications Aren't Working

Despite numerous intervention attempts to make producing coffee an economically sustainable venture in recent years, especially since the market dropped to below $1.00 in 2017, gains from these initiatives have had a relatively small impact on the global industry.

Let's quickly explore why most coffee producers and workers have not experienced a meaningful rise in income from recent intervention efforts.

Project-Based Interventions

When visiting producing communities, the lack of physical infrastructure can feel shocking. This contrast has led to an abundance of project-based interventions, where coffee buyers and NGOs suggest investing in projects they believe will enhance quality of life for farmers.

Building clean water wells or new processing stations are examples of projects.

Unfortunately, project-based interventions, though well-intentioned, are often misaligned with the deeper needs of producers.

- **Projects are typically band aid solutions.**Not having accessible clean water is a serious issue that millions face, but there's a deep-rooted cause for why

communities haven't been able to resolve these issues already. The root problem isn't unclean water, but economic forces that have kept communities from building their own solutions.

- **Projects limit producers' business autonomy.** Empowering producers to establish sustainable prices for their coffee where they can resolve their own challenges creates opportunities to enhance business acumen. Projects don't offer those same opportunities.
- **It's easy to bulldoze over true community needs.** Producers struggling to break-even year after year do not always feel capable of speaking up against project ideas that do not truly serve their communities. We've seen more than a few projects completed by ambitious buyers that the local community had zero need for (all while the buyer praises the initiative in their marketing efforts).

While there are stories of positive outcomes from project-based initiatives, projects do not offer a large-enough-scale resolution to begin to tackle the coffee pricing crisis.

Traceability Initiatives

Opaque supply chains are a barrier to enacting measurable change. You cannot thoughtfully improve what you cannot see or track. But improving traceability isn't the same as creating a more sustainable industry.

Traceability initiatives are often marketed as the connective tissue between producers and consumers. The unspoken assumption is that, if you show consumers where their coffee comes from, you somehow empower the farmer.

Connecting the dots from farm to cup doesn't create or ensure any meaningful improvement on the part of the farmer.

It might discourage unethical buying behaviors, because others can find and communicate with those farmers (and create a stir when they discover unethical

business practices on the part of the farmer), but it doesn't actually *encourage* fairer prices. For all the consumer knows, those farmers could still be paid peanuts.

Direct Trade

Direct Trade was an honest attempt for individual buyers to exit the C Market and negotiate contracts directly with farmers. The idea was, if buyers could cut out the middle-people (traders, speculators, wholesaling importers), it would result in a higher percentage of prices going directly to farms.

A handful of coffee companies have done extraordinarily well with the direct trade model, publishing the prices they pay to farmers transparently and demonstrating that they've followed through on the direct trade premise.

For most roasters, however, the direct trade model does nothing to guarantee fair prices.

Deals made directly with farmers, if not published transparently, have zero checks and balances. There is no accountability or regulation, so there's no way to ensure farmers are actually receiving a higher, fairer price.

The phrase direct trade became even more of a buzzword when it began appearing in marketing materials for roasters who met farmers directly, but still primarily sourced beans via importers. Ultimately, direct trade is far too nebulous to resolve our industry's crisis.

Fairness and Environmental Certifications

Certifications that create elevated price floors based on cost of production have helped a small set of farmers, but there are two key drawbacks.

One, the burden to become certified is primarily on producers. The time and money it takes to pay for audits, make farm adjustments, and achieve certifications is a deal-breaker for many producers who struggle to operate at break-even.

Two, and more importantly, **they rarely take into account context-specific living income benchmarks**. Meeting the cost of production, therefore, doesn't mean

what many believe it to.

Despite the lower cost of production (and higher profit margin on average), 69% percent of Nicaragua's smallholder coffee farmers still experienced food insecurity in the 2000s. Achieving a "break-even" price for farms doesn't guarantee that workers are actually paid a living income.

The mechanisms that certifications use to help farmers reach the cost of production are the *price premium* and *price floor*.

Price premiums are differentials ranging from **+$0.05 to +$0.30** that buyers pay farmers for their coffee, which is certified to be farmed more sustainably. The problem is, many of these premiums are built on top of the c-price. And when the c-price is as low as it has been for years, even higher premiums do not help producers reach the cost of production, let alone pay a true living income. **Price floors** are a mechanism to determine a minimum price a buyer can pay for green coffee.

Unfortunately, both premiums and floors are rarely context-specific, which makes them helpful, but not a long-term solution since they are incapable of adapting to the unique needs of different countries and regions.

Experiments with certifications over the last few decades have given us a lot of good work to build on top of in future efforts, but existing certifications alone—as long as they are still based around the c-price—cannot go far enough to provide a living income to producers around the world and resolve the pricing crisis.

We Created a New Green Coffee Pricing Methodology

It's not enough to aim for the cost of production, because even when farms break-even on absolute costs, there's still the hidden cost of millions of workers who aren't yet paid a living income.

In order to reach sustainability, the coffee industry must become fine-tuned to the *living income realities* of producers at a local level, like education, healthcare, and adequate housing.

That’s why we joined forces with organizations across the coffee sector and hope to set a new industry standard for price discovery and actionable data collection that ensures producers are paid a true living income.

We’re calling the methodology: **Verified Living Income**.

Using this process, we discovered that we at Bellwether were not paying as fair a price for green coffee as we believed we were. It’s time for that to change, both for us and in the greater coffee industry.