

How To Become a Successful Barista – Complete Hospitality Training

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Details:

Technique gets you hired. What makes a barista genuinely successful is a shorter list than most guides suggest, and only part of it is about coffee. This page sets out what the accredited unit behind barista work actually asks of you, what the craft asks on top of that, and where the two are commonly confused.

The accredited benchmark: SITHFAB025

The nationally recognised unit for espresso work is SITHFAB025 Prepare and serve espresso coffee . It is the entry-level accredited measure of barista skill in the SIT Tourism, Travel and Hospitality Training Package, and it is precise about what competence means.

To be assessed as competent you must prepare ten named espresso beverages, each on three separate occasions , within commercial timeframes, and correct extraction when it drifts. The ten are fixed by the unit:

| # | Beverage | # | Beverage | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | 1 | Caffè latte | 6 | Piccolo latte | | 2 | Cappuccino | 7 | Mocha | | 3 | Espresso (short black) | 8 | Ristretto | | 4 | Flat white | 9 | Short macchiato | | 5 | Long black | 10 | Long macchiato |

Thirty competent preparations is the floor, not the ceiling. The reason the unit counts occasions rather than drinks is that it is testing repeatability. One good flat white is luck. Three, on three different days, under time pressure, is skill.

The unit imposes no service-period requirement at all, unlike SITHFAB024 , SITHFAB027 , SITHFAB038 and SITHFAB034 . Its entire volume is beverages and occasions, so a provider telling you the espresso unit needs a peak shift is describing their delivery model rather than the standard.

Where the difficulty actually sits: seven of the ten

Count the milk and the shape of the task changes. Only three of the ten are milk-free — espresso (short black), long black and ristretto — because both macchiatos and the mocha take milk. The other seven require textured milk , each on three occasions, so 21 of the 30 assessed preparations go through a jug .

That single ratio explains why milk texturing is where most people plateau, and it tells you where to spend your practice. A barista whose extraction is good and whose milk is inconsistent has not failed one beverage; they have failed seven, three times each. Anyone deciding what to work on next should work on the jug.

The prerequisite nobody mentions

SITHFAB025 carries SITXFSA005 Use hygienic practices for food safety as a prerequisite. That is a formal prerequisite in the training package, not a recommendation, so it has to be sequenced: the hygiene unit is completed first, then the espresso unit. If a course advertises the espresso unit without addressing the prerequisite, ask how it is being handled before you enrol.

SITXFSA005 has its own assessment pattern, and it also counts occasions. You must demonstrate each of the following on at least three occasions : correct hand-washing; appropriate use of uniform and personal protective equipment; effective personal health and hygiene practices; and hygienic food service. You must also know the procedures for reporting unsafe hygiene practices.

It is worth clearing early for a reason beyond coffee: within the food and beverage stream SITXFSA005 is the prerequisite for nine units — SITHFAB022 , SITHFAB023 , SITHFAB024 , SITHFAB025 , SITHFAB026 , SITHFAB027 , SITHFAB030 , SITHFAB034 and SITHFAB035 — which makes it the gateway to the whole stream. Keep the figure scoped to that stream: the same unit also sits in front of cookery, patisserie and kitchen units elsewhere in the SIT package, so a package-wide total would be a different number about a different set. RSA reaches just as far: SITHFAB021 is a prerequisite to nine units of its own, so it gates exactly as many as the food safety unit does.

Four units in the stream carry two or more prerequisites. SITHFAB023 Operate a bar and SITHFAB034 Provide table service of food and beverage each carry two, and in both the second is RSA SITHFAB021 . SITHFAB030 Prepare and serve cocktails carries three — SITXFSA005 , SITHFAB021 and SITHFAB023 — and SITHFAB039 Manage the sale or service of wine carries three of its own.

The knowledge the unit expects

SITHFAB025 is not only a practical test. The unit's knowledge evidence requires you to understand:

Types and characteristics of espresso coffee beverages, and of different milks for different drinks

Characteristics of different beans, blends and roasts

Mise en place requirements for coffee service

Methods and techniques for grinding, measuring, tamping, extracting and milk texturing

Quality indicators for espresso extraction, and extraction rates for different beverages

Factors relevant to quality, specifically ambient humidity, crema, espresso flow, steam pressure and taste

Adjustments to dose, grind, tamping technique, water flow and water pressure

Essential features and functions of espresso machines and grinders, and basic maintenance and cleaning methods

Options for customer preferences: accompaniments, blends, service-ware, strength, sweeteners, and types of beans and milk

Read that list again and notice what is on it. Humidity. Steam pressure. Cleaning. The unit treats a barista as someone who manages a variable system, not someone who repeats a recipe.

Get the coffee right first

There is no substitute for the fundamentals: consistent grind and dose, extraction you can read and correct, and milk texturing , which is where most baristas plateau — and, as the seven-of-ten count above shows, where most of the assessment lives. Microfoam should be glossy and pour as a single body. If your latte art is not working, the problem is nearly always the texturing, not the pour. See milk texturing 101 .

The skill that separates people is diagnosis : tasting a shot, knowing it is under-extracted rather than just bad, and changing the right variable. As CHT teaches it, the shot tells you what is wrong while it is still running:

| What you see | What it usually means | | --- | --- | | Pale stream early | Grind too coarse, or the basket is underfilled | | Slow drips, or the shot stalls | Grind too fine, or the dose is too high | | Uneven flow from

the spouts | The puck was not level, or water has channelled | | Sour, thin shot | Under-extracted — running too fast | | Harsh, bitter shot | Over-extracted — running too slow |

Grind moves during a shift as humidity and beans change, which is precisely why the unit names ambient humidity as a quality factor. A good barista notices before the customer does.

Own the machine

Most "the machine is broken" problems are maintenance problems. Backflushing, group head cleaning, grinder hygiene and immediate steam wand purging are not chores separate from the craft. They are the craft, and the unit's knowledge evidence lists them. Rancid oils taste exactly like bad coffee.

Our own teaching practice on this is simple: purge the steam wand before and after every use and wipe it with a damp cloth; clean the group head regularly; give the machine time to come up to temperature before service rather than pulling the first shot cold; and never re-steam milk that has already been steamed.

Learning why something happened beats memorising a setting, because the setting will be wrong tomorrow.

Build for the rush

The morning peak is where cafe work is won or lost. That means sequencing several drinks at once, keeping the station clean while doing it, and holding the same quality on the fortieth coffee as on the first.

This is the part the unit captures in the phrase within commercial timeframes . It is not enough to make a correct cappuccino. You have to make it at the speed a paying venue needs, while a queue watches. That requirement is the reason workplace service hours matter and practice at home only goes so far. How long that takes varies by person and by how much service time you actually get, so treat any confident number you read with suspicion, including on other pages about how long barista training takes .

Remember it is a service job

A cafe barista is customer-facing, and the accredited structure reflects that. The SITSS00080 Espresso Machine Operation skill set, which is the compact accredited package built around espresso work, contains four units and only one of them is about coffee:

| Unit | Title | | --- | --- | | SITHFAB025 | Prepare and serve espresso coffee | | SITXCCS014 | Provide service to customers | | SITXFIN007 | Process financial transactions | | SITXFSA005 | Use hygienic practices for food safety |

That is the job described honestly: coffee, service, the till, and hygiene. Its stated target group is espresso machine operators in cafes, restaurants, bars, clubs, and function and event venues , and achievement provides credit towards SIT Training Package qualifications , so it is not a dead end.

Regulars come back for the person as much as the coffee, and the ability to keep a queue calm matters as much as extraction. The service unit inside that skill set has its own volume, worth knowing because it is more than most cafe inductions cover: SITXCCS014 requires quality service to three different internal and three different external customers , the resolution of three different customer complaints , and effective communication with at least one customer with special needs . Note "internal" — the kitchen is a customer of the coffee bench. See how to deliver exceptional customer service in hospitality and dealing with difficult guests .

Cover the legal ground

Two requirements commonly apply to cafe work and neither is part of espresso training by default.

Food handler training. A cafe that makes and serves unpackaged food that is both potentially hazardous and ready to eat is a category one business under Standard 3.2.2A, which commenced 8 December 2023 . Milk-based drinks put a barista squarely in that picture. Under the Standard, a food handler must complete food handler training, or possess skills and knowledge commensurate with the activity, before carrying out a prescribed activity.

Three things about that training are widely misreported:

It does not have to be nationally accredited. A free course covering safe food handling, food contamination, cleaning and sanitising, and personal hygiene satisfies the Standard.

It mandates no refresher period . The five-year clock belongs to the separate Food Safety Supervisor certificate, not to food handler training.

The business is not required to keep records of it, although category one businesses do have to keep substantiation records of temperature control, cooling, cleaning and sanitising and similar, for three months , accessible at the premises.

So what does the accredited unit buy? Portability and proof, not permission — and, because a prerequisite can only be met by the unit itself, it is also the only route into the nine stream units that list SITXFSA005 . See food handling and virtual food handling SITXFSA005 .

On allergens and milk substitutes this page states no duty, because none appears in the material behind it and a guessed allergen rule is worse than none. Separate jugs and proper cleaning where a dairy allergy rather than an intolerance is involved is sound practice; the legal requirement is a question for your state or territory food regulator.

RSA , if the venue is licensed. Plenty of baristas work in venues that also serve alcohol. That is one unit, SITHFAB021 , and the rules differ by state — see /rsa .

Arriving with both makes you materially easier to hire.

Make the training count

If you want your barista skills to contribute towards further training, ask about nationally recognised units. Successful completion of SITHFAB025 or the SITSS00080 skill set can be recorded on a Statement of Attainment and may support credit towards a qualification. For nationally recognised training, a Unique Student Identifier (USI) is generally required before a qualification or Statement of Attainment can be issued , unless an applicable exemption applies. See the official USI exemption guidance . A USI is free at usi.gov.au . If you already have one, recover it rather than creating another.

SITHFAB025 is an elective in both SIT30622 Certificate III in Hospitality and SIT30722 Certificate III in Hospitality (Restaurant Front of House) , and it is not a core unit of any of our qualifications. SIT30722 is worth noting for baristas: it carries SITXFSA005 as a core unit, so the espresso prerequisite is included, but students still need to complete it. See SIT30622 and SIT30722 .

A non-accredited course teaches real skills but does not credit-transfer. That is not a criticism — our barista master class , latte art and coffee appreciation offerings are delivery formats and interest courses, not credentials, and there is no unit code behind any of them. Just know which one you are buying.

The next coffee unit, which almost nobody names

Most career pages jump from "barista" straight to "management", and skip the accredited step in between. There is one, and for a barista who wants to stay in coffee rather than move into roasting and budgets, it is the more relevant target.

SITHFAB038 Plan and monitor espresso coffee service is current on our scope as RTO 3722 at extent "Deliver and assess" to 30 June 2032 . It assesses running the coffee operation rather than working in it:

| Element | What it covers | | --- | --- | | 1. Plan coffee beverage service | Develop coffee beverage menus, select suppliers and roasters , liaise with suppliers so quality standards hold | | 2. Provide specialist advice on espresso coffee beverages | Keep your own knowledge current, answer customer questions, give accurate information to staff , promote coffee appreciation | | 3. Monitor quality of coffee beverages | Identify the characteristics of superior espresso , evaluate bean freshness , monitor grind and dose consistency, assess beverage quality | | 4. Monitor and maintain equipment | Monitor machines for efficiency, monitor temperature and water pressure , develop environmentally sound practices, schedule service calls |

Its performance evidence requires the candidate to coordinate the operational aspects of espresso coffee preparation for an outlet across at least six service periods , to maintain commercial grade machines and grinders throughout each of those six, and to monitor the consistency and quality of eight named characteristics : appearance including opacity or transparency, aroma, colour, flavour, freshness, presentation, taste and volume.

Three things make it worth knowing about early.

First, it is the register's own description of a head barista's job. Element 1 covers supplier and roaster selection, element 2 covers training the people beside you, element 4 covers deciding when the machine needs a technician. Those are the duties that actually separate a senior barista from a good one, and they are assessable.

Second, it changes the unit of measurement. SITHFAB025 counts cups ; SITHFAB038 counts services . Six service periods of coordinating an outlet cannot be compressed, which is why it is a genuinely later step rather than a longer version of the same course.

Third, and unexpectedly: SITHFAB038 has no prerequisite units at all — not SITXFSA005 , and not SITHFAB025 . The entry-level espresso unit is gated and the senior one is not. If you have been running a bench for years without a certificate, that is the unit to ask about, and it is usually the better recognition-of-prior-learning target than the beginner's unit.

If the part of coffee you enjoy is the talking rather than the machine, the parallel route is SITSS00075 Beverage Advice , a skill set on our scope aimed at the advisory side.

Where it can lead

Head barista and cafe supervisor, with SITHFAB038 as the accredited marker of that step, then venue management through SIT40422 Certificate IV in Hospitality — a qualification where three of the nine core units are human resources units , which tells you what the step up actually involves. See Certificate IV in Hospitality .

Some move into roasting, training or opening their own place, where the business content of a diploma starts to matter. SITHFAB038 element 1 is the closest accredited preparation for the supplier and roaster side of that, and element 2 for the training side.

Others use the ticket sideways, because it has a direct effect on minimum pay. Under MA000009 (hotels, pubs, taverns, resorts, casinos), MA000119 (standalone restaurants, cafes, night clubs) and MA000058 (not-for-profit registered clubs), a relevant AQF Certificate III or higher, used at work, sets a minimum classification of Level 4 . The fast food award, MA000003 , which covers takeaway and food-court outlets, has no equivalent provision — so the same qualification is a pay argument behind a cafe counter with tables and not behind a food-court counter. Which award applies is decided by the premises, not the job title . See superannuation, tax and payslips .

It is a floor rather than an automatic uplift: MA000009 and MA000119 both require that you make use of the skills and knowledge derived from those Certificate III competencies in the work you actually do. And note that the floor attaches to a qualification, not to a unit or a skill set — which is the practical reason to carry the espresso unit onward into a Certificate III rather than stopping at it.

About us

We are Complete Hospitality Training, RTO 3722, CRICOS 04242E. Level 3, 28 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, and 410 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010. Contact melbourne@cht.edu.au or +61 3 9654 1554.

We link to the relevant course and regulatory sources in this guide. Check those sources for current requirements, and confirm course availability, delivery, fees and entry requirements with us before enrolling.

Source records and further guidance

We link the unit records and regulator guidance relevant to this page below. Check the current source before making an enrolment, licensing or employment decision.

SITHFAB025 Prepare and serve espresso coffee

SITXFSA005 Use hygienic practices for food safety

SITHFAB038 Plan and monitor espresso coffee service

SITSS00080 Espresso Machine Operation

SITHFAB021 Provide responsible service of alcohol

Food Standards Code — Standards 3.2.2 and 3.2.2A (food safety practices and food safety management tools)

Hospitality Industry (General) Award 2020 (MA000009)

Restaurant Industry Award 2020 (MA000119)

Unique Student Identifier (USI) requirements for RTOs

Assessment wording clarified on 2 October 2026. SITXFSA005 unit record.

What is the hardest skill to master?

Consistent milk texturing, and holding quality through a rush. The first is where seven of the ten assessed beverages live; the second is what the unit tests with the phrase "within commercial timeframes".

Exactly what does SITHFAB025 require?

Ten named espresso beverages, each prepared on three separate occasions, within commercial timeframes, with extraction adjusted and corrected as needed. Thirty preparations minimum, and no service-period requirement.

Which ten beverages are named?

Caffe latte, cappuccino, espresso (short black), flat white, long black, piccolo latte, mocha, ristretto, short macchiato and long macchiato.

How many of them involve milk?

Seven. Only espresso, long black and ristretto are milk-free, so 21 of the 30 assessed preparations require textured milk.

Does SITHFAB025 have a prerequisite?

Yes. SITXFSA005 Use hygienic practices for food safety. It must be completed before the espresso unit, and within the food and beverage stream it gates nine units in all — SITHFAB022, SITHFAB023, SITHFAB024, SITHFAB025, SITHFAB026, SITHFAB027, SITHFAB030, SITHFAB034 and SITHFAB035. Four of those carry two or more prerequisites: SITHFAB023 and SITHFAB034 carry two, and SITHFAB030 and SITHFAB039 carry three.

Is there an accredited unit above the barista unit?

Yes. SITHFAB038 Plan and monitor espresso coffee service, which covers coffee menus, selecting suppliers and roasters, specialist advice, quality monitoring across eight named characteristics, and equipment maintenance — assessed across at least six service periods.

Do I need SITHFAB025 before SITHFAB038?

No. SITHFAB038 has no prerequisite units at all, which makes it the unusual case of the senior unit being less gated than the entry-level one, and often the better recognition target for an experienced barista.

Is latte art assessed?

No. Latte art is not part of the performance or knowledge evidence for SITHFAB025, and there is no accredited latte art unit. It follows from correct milk texturing, which is assessed. The nearest thing is SITHFAB038, where appearance and presentation are judged for consistency across a service rather than as a pattern.

Is a "barista master class" a qualification?

No. It is a delivery format. There is no unit or qualification code called a barista master class, and no accredited coffee appreciation unit either — though SITHFAB038 element 2 does require promoting coffee appreciation.

Does a Certificate III lift my minimum pay?

Under MA000009, MA000119 and MA000058 it sets a minimum classification of Level 4, provided you make use of the relevant skills at work. Under MA000003, the fast food award, there is no equivalent provision. A food-court coffee counter is generally MA000003; a cafe with sit-down service is MA000119. The floor attaches to the qualification, not to a single unit.

How long until I am good?

Longer than a course and shorter than a career. The honest answer is that it depends on how much real service time you get, and we do not publish a figure we would be willing to defend as a fact.

Do I need my own machine at home?

It helps for repetitions, but commercial service provides far more of them, and only service builds the speed the unit asks for. See making great coffee at home (</news/making-great-coffee-at-home/>).

Which unit should a barista course be built on?

SITHFAB025, or the SITSS00080 Espresso Machine Operation skill set, which wraps it with customer service, financial transactions and hygiene and provides credit towards SIT qualifications.

Is SITHFAB024 the barista unit?

No. SITHFAB024 Prepare and serve non-alcoholic beverages covers the rest of a cafe list, and its beverage range is described as including "non-espresso coffees". It is a useful companion unit, not a

substitute. It carries the same SITXFSA005 prerequisite and additionally requires three service periods including one peak.

Do I need a licence to make coffee?

No. No occupational licensing, certification or specific legislative requirement applies to the SITSS00080 skill set. Food safety obligations and, in a licensed venue, RSA are separate matters.

Do I need a food handling certificate to work as a barista?

You need food handler training, or commensurate skills and knowledge, before carrying out a prescribed activity in a category one or two business. It does not have to be accredited. An accredited unit gives you portable, provable evidence — and it is the only thing that satisfies the prerequisite on the nine stream units.

Is there a route for someone who wants the coffee knowledge rather than the machine?

SITSS00075 Beverage Advice is the skill set aimed at the advisory side, and SITHFAB038 element 2 covers specialist advice within the senior espresso unit.

What is the fee for barista training with you?

Fees change, so this page does not print one. Confirm the current fee directly on the barista coffee course (</courses/barista-coffee-course/>) page or with the office.

Can I do accredited barista training outside Melbourne?

We deliver accredited barista training in Sydney as well — see accredited barista training in Sydney NSW (</courses/accredited-barista-training-in-sydney-nsw/>).