

Her Filters/Your Coffee: The perfect cup of coffee experience of today it is not at all like the imperfect cup of coffee experience back in the early 1900s, thanks to the ingenuity of an industrious woman in 1908, who changed the way coffee is brewed.

The coffee-brewing method of the era was to wrap loose coffee grounds in linen that was placed in a cup with boiled water. This method resulted in a brew laden with bitter residue grounds that leached into the liquid blend and contributed not only to a bitter tasting coffee, but also to the unpleasant presence of the bitter sediment in the mouth and on the taste buds. This was especially provoking to a coffee connoisseur and enterprising young woman in Germany who set out to purify the coffee blend, and she did.

Melitta Bentz (1873-1950), a thirty-five year old housewife in Dresden, experimented with various methods of brewing in her quest to make a cleaner cup of coffee. One day Melitta took a brass cup, pounded holes in it with a nail and fitted a piece of blotting paper from her son Willi's school exercise book over the holes to create a two-part filtration system. She then placed fresh ground coffee on the paper and poured hot water, just off the boil, over the ground coffee. It worked perfectly. She got a flavorful "clean" cup of coffee, and "Voila!" the coffee filter and drip coffee pour over system were born.

Melitta applied for and received a patent for her device and filter paper from the Berlin Imperial Patent Office the summer of 1908. That same year, she founded and registered a commercial company bearing her name, the Melitta Coffee Company.

Her little company venture was one room in her apartment, a room filled with 10 cartons of filter paper and 50 cup size round filters just made. It was a family business. Her husband Hugo and their sons Horst and Willi were her first employees. They personally peddled her product again and again in department stores, in stores that sold household goods, and at trade fairs.



Melitta worked to improve her simple filtered method of coffee making. She developed new techniques to enhance the shape, the material, the performance, and the production process of her filter systems. Her coffee filter design received awards, became popular and was in high demand. Her company grew and experienced great success.

In 1910, the company won a gold medal at the International Health Exhibition and a silver medal at the Saxon Innkeepers' Association. However, during the First World War (1914-1918) their medals were requisitioned to build German zeppelins and Hugo was

conscripted to Romania. Paper was rationed and coffee beans were impossible to import due to the British blockade. Her company faltered during these war years but resurged when war ended.

By 1928 the demand for her products grew and her company now employed eighty workers in a double-shift system and had produced over 100,000 filters. Within a year, expansion called for the business to move to larger facilities first several times in Dresden and ultimately to Minden in eastern Westphalia.

In the 1930s, her company redesigned the filter compartment into the shape of a cone. It created a larger filtration area and improved extraction of the ground coffee. It also introduced the cone-shaped paper filter to fit inside the redesigned cone-shape filter compartment.



Melitta transferred her majority stake in the company to Horst and Willi in 1932, but continued to work and to influence the business. She established a Christmas bonus, increased paid vacation time from six to fifteen days per year, and reduced the working week to five days. She also developed the company's "Melitta Aid" system, a social fund for company employees.

At the outbreak of World War II in 1939 coffee filter production had to be stopped as the company was ordered to produce goods to aid the war effort. Not until 1948, eleven years later, could her company's production of filters and paper be resumed.

In 1963, her business expanded to include production in the United States and subsequently opened branches in other countries worldwide. Her little one-room business became one of the largest coffee companies in the world.

In 1989, environmentally friendly, natural brown coffee filters made from unbleached pulp were introduced, making her company one of the first to keep unwanted by-products from leaching into the environment. However, as the white coffee filters remained to be most popular, in 1992 the company developed an oxygen-bleaching process to produce white paper without chlorine. As of 2015, more than 100 years after her "Voila!" coffee moment in her kitchen in Germany, her company employed 3,300 people in 50 locations.

Melitta Bentz is recognized as the inventor of the cone filtration system—still considered a superior method of brewing coffee and her innovation remains the precursor to all modern pour-over and drip coffee brewing worldwide.

So, the next time you smell the aroma of freshly brewed coffee, brew your own first cup

in the morning at home, get your cup from a barista, or leisurely sip a cup at a coffee cafe, take a moment to think of and thank a woman who, long ago, improved the way coffee is brewed for your drinking pleasure today. And tell everyone in the cafe, the barista in the shop, and/or from home, everyone in your social network online, of the woman you are thanking and why. Why?



Because

as women's achievements traditionally have been overlooked, looked over, (not poured over:) often never even looked at, chances are you are the only one in the cafe, in the shop, or in your social network, who knows about Melitta and her coffee brewing achievement, an achievement we all experience now in the twenty-first century. And, your "Share," and/or "Like" could brew a conversation about a woman all coffee lovers, for sure, would love to thank. Thank you:)

Sources: <http://www.herstorynetwork.com/thank-woman/melitta-bentz/>;
<https://www.melitta-group.com/en/Biography-of-Melitta-Bentz-187.html>;
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