

# The Art of Coffee

Decades of innovation and consistency bring illy caffè's aroma-rich coffee to consumers all over the world. **By Stephanie Crets**

## company profile

**Illy Caffè**

[www.illy.com](http://www.illy.com)

**Employees:** 1,050

**Headquarters:** Trieste, Italy and Rye Brooke, N.Y.

**Andrea Illy, chairman and CEO:** "I grew up hearing about coffee. It's my life, and I didn't see any reasonable alternative."

**F**or illy caffè, coffee is a mission, a passion and an obsession. Armed with a dream of offering people the greatest coffee in the world, Francisco Illy founded illy in 1933 in Trieste, Italy, where he developed the first automatic coffee machine using pressure. Coffee lovers today know it as the first espresso machine. Fast-forward several decades through many successes and three generations, and Chairman and CEO Andrea Illy is now at the helm of the most global coffee company in the world.

"I grew up hearing about coffee," Illy says. "It's my life, and I didn't see any reasonable alternative. The company was shaped around the dream to offer the very best coffee in the world; a very romantic dream in a sense because offering is better than selling or distributing or serving."

With the dream influencing the company's goals, illy developed five pillars of expertise on which it builds its business to make that dream a reality. First, illy coffee is all about selection. Every second of every day 20,000 illy beans are sorted in a sustainable and certified supply chain,



>> illy coffee is found in more than 140 countries in the hospitality, workplace, home and transit industries.

with quality ensured in each bean through 10 different criteria.

"Our product is unique because of the best possible beans made by growers in the best places in the world," Illy explains. "We work hand-in-hand with growers to select the best beans. They follow our practices ergonomically and this allows us to get the best coffee beans available in the market."

The second pillar in illy coffee is blending. The company chooses to use a blend because it is richer in terms of aroma, but also more harmonious and balanced in terms of taste and flavor, according to Illy. The company's strategy is for the illy blend to be the same in all countries in which it is sold.

Thirdly, illy focuses on roasting because the quality begins with the cof-



>> illy works hand-in-hand with growers to select the best beans to create the best coffee aroma profile.

fee bean and its transformation during the roasting process. Illy says that 99 percent of illy's coffee aromas are generated during the roasting process. "You need to be a master of roasting, maximizing the aroma profile and making it very consistent," he adds.

The fourth pillar is the pressurization process of the illy coffee package that was developed by Francesco Illy. During the manufacturing and packaging process, oxygen is replaced with inert gas under pressure. This combina-

tion allows the company to preserve the freshness and fragrance of the coffee until the moment it is consumed. "It also makes the aroma more complex because it allows it to age like a precious wine," Illy explains. "We have a much more complex, refined aroma profile thanks to this exclusive technology."

Lastly, with the increasing popularity of single-serve coffee pods, illy developed and added the Iper technology to its repertoire for the single-serve market. "It's a different way to prepare coffee both at home and in restaurants and hotels, not percolation, but a new system for a better aroma and velvet body while ensuring quality in the cup," Illy says.

## Expanding Brand

illy is found in more than 140 countries and more than 100,000 restaurants and cafés and operates in four strategic business areas: hospitality, workplace, home and transit. Transit includes both traveling and commuting, and it's recently become a booming marketplace. To target more on-the-go consumers, illy partnered with Coca-Cola, which manufactures and distributes a bottled, ready-to-drink illy blend. Always consistent no matter where or how the coffee is being produced and consumed, the bottle blend will be the same type that a customer enjoys in a café or when brewing it themselves at home.

"It's a good way for consumers to access high-quality coffee and make coffee accessible where you don't have freshly brewed coffee," Illy says.

As the travel industry is another important market, illy has tapped into that as well. While it already has partnerships with international companies like Air France and Singapore Airlines, illy was selected by United Airlines to be the company's official coffee for travelers. "We are very happy to offer the illy coffee to passengers flying United," Illy says. "It signifies a deep commitment on their part to providing a quality experience on board and in their lounges."

illy's mission is to bring the best coffee nature can provide, enhanced with the best technology, to all corners of the world. Through these partnerships and continued innovations, illy can serve

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>> Single-serve coffee pods and on-the-go blended drinks are some of the innovative new products illy has to offer.



customers its coffee blend through new, unique ways.

“When the market changes, we have to adapt and develop new projects,” Illy says. “But we are uncompromising in our heritage and core strategy; we never compromise our dream to offer the greatest coffee in the world, the strategy of the unique blend. Sometimes it’s tricky to do new things without chang-

hibition, Expo 2015, which ran from May 1 to Oct. 31. illy was not only the official coffee partner for Expo 2015, but also the official coffee provider for the USA Pavilion. In its “Coffee Cluster” common area, illy saw 13 million visitors out of the 21 million people that attended the expo.

Illy says this proves the global reach of the company and its obsession with two

“Without our employees, we would not have delighted consumers or a wonderful product,” Illy says. “Without suppliers, we would not have the beautiful coffee we are talking about. Last but not least, we have the shareholder, who is in the service of the company. They’re not there to collect profit, but to support and invest in the company evolution.”

This ties back to the important values illy has held since the company was born with respect to its heritage and reputation. “What I’m really proud of is the consistency you can find in all these aspects by offering the best coffee, within our own technology and working hand-in-hand with growers and providing them with the opportunity of development,” Illy explains. “This is a way to really make everything connected in the proper way. The internal consistency is my greatest pride.”

And finally, what describes Illy’s perfect cup of illy coffee? “Espresso: a straight single espresso, made with the espresso system,” he says. “No milk, no sugar, nothing else, but served in our beautiful iconic illy porcelain cup.” **FD**

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**“We have a much more complex, refined aroma profile thanks to this exclusive technology.” – Andrea Illy**

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ing what you were doing in the past. It’s becoming a narrow path, but it helps you constantly reinforce what you’ve been doing all along.”

### **Forever Consistent**

Last year, illy was able to take part in Milan’s World’s Fair and Universal Ex-

values: the passion for excellence and business ethics. As a family business, illy takes care of both its shareholders and its stakeholders. Illy says that the company is not meant to be a profit machine, but should focus on taking care of not only the customers, but also anyone who has a vested interest in it.



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