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Espresso Machine Cleaning (Daily Backflush)

A dirty espresso machine makes bitter coffee and wears out gaskets and valves early. This is the end-of-day clean for a commercial machine with a three-way solenoid valve, the kind most cafés use. It's written for the closing barista and takes about 15 minutes on a two-group machine. Check your machine's manual first: some machines, including lever machines, should never be backflushed.

What you'll need

- Blind basket (no holes)
- Espresso machine cleaning powder or tablets
- Group head brush
- Clean cloths
- Container for soaking

Steps

01 **Take the baskets out of the portafilters and put them in to soak.**

Use hot water and cleaning powder, in the amount on the product label.

02 **Scrub the group head gasket and shower screen with the brush.**

Run water through the group for a second while you brush to flush out loose grounds.

03 **Fit the blind basket into a portafilter and add the cleaning powder.**

Use the amount on the product label, usually about half a teaspoon.

04 **Lock in the portafilter and run the group for 10 seconds.**

When you stop it, you'll hear the pressure release into the drip tray. That's the backflush working.

05 **Repeat the 10-second cycle until you've done 5 in total.**

Let the group rest for a few seconds between cycles.

> **Watch out:** Never more than 5 cycles with detergent. It dries out the group gasket.

06 **Rinse the detergent out with 5 more cycles of clean water.**

Take out the portafilter, rinse the blind basket, lock it back in and run 5 cycles of 10 seconds.

07 **Run a short flush of water and smell it.**

If you can still smell detergent, rinse again. Leftover detergent spoils tomorrow's first coffees.

08 **Repeat the backflush on every group.**

Do one group at a time so you don't lose count of the cycles.

09 **Scrub the soaked baskets and the metal part of each portafilter, then rinse well.**

Keep the handle out of the soak; only the metal part goes in.

> **Watch out:** Soaking the whole portafilter cracks the handle over time.

10 **Wrap the steam wand in a damp cloth and purge it for 2 seconds.**

Then wipe the wand from top to tip. Use a wand cleaner if milk has dried on.

11 **Unscrew the steam tips once a week and clear the holes.**

Use a paper clip or the tool that came with the machine.

12 **Empty and wash the drip tray and its grate.**

Wipe underneath the tray too, where coffee builds up.

13 **Wipe down the outside of the machine and the cup warmer.**

Use a dry cloth on hot panels.

14 **Leave the portafilters out of the group heads overnight.**

It lets the gaskets rest. Only turn the machine off if your owner says so; many cafés leave it on.

How to adapt it

- Check your machine's manual for the right cleaner and number of cycles.
- Use the same brand of cleaner every time so the dose stays the same.
- Put a QR code for this procedure on the side of the machine.
- Add a weekly step to clean the grinder burrs with grinder cleaning tablets.