

Fit for Growth – Service Stations

Somewhere in the Münsterland, Germany, 6:30 a.m. The service station is already busy. But people aren't filling up their cars, they're here buying coffee and rolls. During the current crisis, service station owners are among the winners in the coffee and snack industry. While bakeries and (open) coffee bars are recording losses of over 50% in hot drinks, members of some professional groups are turning to service stations to get their coffee fix instead.



And there are plenty of reasons why. You get to stop in front of the pump and not get rained on, you can wait in the warm shop and use contactless payment methods. The taste of the coffee seems to be good value for money and the many customers are prepared to accept compromises. But Multiple test purchases showed that the taste of a “latte macchiato”, for example, can vary greatly from shop to shop in the same chain of service stations. Sometimes the coffee is stronger, sometimes it's weaker. Sometimes there's more milk foam, sometimes less - as seen in the example below.

We made similar observations in bakery chain stores during a test in December and January. Many products tasted different depending on the store. When asked, only a few customers said they would even complain about this difference. Another likely example of a compromise because of the pandemic. The GA-Trendagentur is convinced, however, that this willingness to compromise will change after the corona crisis is over.



Below are the most common reasons for shortcomings in taste and quality.

Tip 1: The bean. Most fully automatic machines have two coffee bean containers. We could observe how, in the heat of the moment, employees sometimes put the coffee crema beans in the espresso containers (or vice versa). Put different colors on the container labels, e.g. blue for coffee crema and gold for espresso beans. Or stick to the colors that roasters often use for their different coffee bean packaging.

Tip 2: The milk. If possible, use the same milk and don't keep switching between

full-fat and UHT milk. This a no-go for lovers of specialty coffee.

Tip 3: The technology. Check the grinding discs on a regular basis or have them serviced if you use whole beans. For fully automatic machines with coffee powder, pay attention to the cleaning intervals.

Tip 4: Inspection log. Create an inspection log for each coffee machine and make sure it gets filled out.

Tip 5: Tasting. Designate someone with an affinity for coffee to check the drinks from each machine once a month.

Tip 6: Employee training. Give your employees training on how to deal with any customer complaints about quality in a generous and polite manner.



Stay true to your image

Pay attention to your image when it comes to the drinks on your coffee menu board. Customers expect to find high-end specialties like the “Flat White” in coffee bars with a high level of expertise in coffee. This is where you’ll find portafilter machines, different milk options and employees with a strong affinity for coffee. Unfortunately, service stations don’t yet belong in this category.



Good Luck and stay safe! For more tips and recent publications on the specialist German coffee market, check out [GA-Trendagentur.com](https://www.ga-trendagentur.com)