



THE CAFÉ OWNER'S TOOLBOX: ESSENTIALS

BY ALEX LAMBERT + JASON "DOUBLE J" JOHNSON

AS LONGTIME COFFEE EQUIPMENT service technicians, we see some pretty wild stuff sometimes. We also see a lot of things that a café owner could easily fix on their own, saving some time and money. So we thought we'd take a one-issue break from our regular *Barista Magazine* column, "High Maintenance: Your Equipment Questions Answered," and offer our ideas for what any café owner should have readily available for quick fixes in their shop.

We always recommend letting your friendly neighborhood coffee techs handle preventive maintenance (PM) and the bigger repairs. It's important to give technicians the opportunity to get to know your equipment, and, hopefully, keep good service records. Plus, some repairs can be a bit dangerous if you aren't properly trained. This approach will often help with actually catching things before they take your machine down in the middle of that busy Saturday, since you caught the problem waaaaay ahead of time when the tech was there for a PM. Keep in mind, too, that a lot of technicians we've worked with will try to help people troubleshoot issues over the phone, and having a few key tools available can sometimes save the technician a trip and hopefully save you a couple bucks on your repair costs.

We'll get back at you in the August+September 2017 issue with more answers to your awesome equipment questions, but right now, let's dig into that toolbox. Now, where did we put our flashlight...

1. TOOLBOX

First things first, get yourself a toolbox and slap a couple of cool stickers on there.

2. BEER

Have a cold one at the ready for when the job is all said and done. Whether you're smiling or crying, treat yourself!

3. ADJUSTABLE WRENCH

Always handy for making quick adjustments to pump pressure, or giving a stuck valve a gentle smack. Having a 6-inch and 12-inch should cover most of your needs.

4. NEEDLE-NOSE PLIERS, CUTTERS, VICE GRIP

These toolbox essentials might not get as much play as some of the others, but we promise you won't regret having them, especially when troubleshooting over the phone with a tech.

5. SCREWDRIVERS

Big ones, small ones, weird ones—you get the idea. Have several different options for flat and Phillips head screwdrivers in multiple lengths.

6. FLASHLIGHT

Things can get pretty scary out there. Always keep a flashlight handy.

7. PICKS

These are super useful for unclogging small passageways, or prying out crusty old gaskets. We like to keep a few different shapes and sizes in our toolboxes.

8. ALLEN WRENCH

Whether you're bleeding a grouphead or tightening up the screws on some of your Swedish-made furniture, you won't regret having a set of metric and standard (U.S.) Allen wrenches (a.k.a hex keys) on hand.

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9. SHOP VAC

Every café should keep a small vacuum cleaner near the grinders. This can be a quick way to clear out a clogged grinder, and it makes cleaning at night a breeze!

10. PURO + PALLO

So many issues can be resolved with cleaning. Be sure to keep plenty of coffee and dairy cleaner on hand.

11. THERMOMETER

A quick temperature read can tell you a lot about what might be going on inside your machine even if you're only using a basic probe thermometer.

12. LEVEL

Over time, counters can start to sink under the weight of the equipment. We've solved a lot of issues over the phone by simply having the café owner adjust a couple of legs.

13. FOOD-SAFE LUBE, PLUMBER'S TAPE, MARKERS

Sometimes adding a little lube to an O-ring, or putting a couple wraps of plumber's tape on a fitting can help seal up a leak until a technician is able to get to you. We also like to keep some markers in the toolbox to write the install date on new parts, or keep track of rising water levels on a sightglass. **b**


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