

spreadsheets—both electronic and old-fashioned pen and paper, where time versus temperature measurements can easily be tracked—has increased the learning curve for new roasters dramatically. Michael Whitley of Diedrich Manufacturing, a leading innovator of roasting equipment, says, “A roaster needs to be a complete chef’s kitchen, and allow the roastmaster the ability to manipulate the roast as he sees fit.”

This has become truer than ever as advancements in quality-oriented technology have been fast and furious of late, making it easier to make quick adjustments to your roaster.

## CONSISTENCY

Perhaps the aspect of roasting that has benefited most from forward thinking is the ability to produce a consistent product. The number of roasters who are taking advantage of the proper equipment is increasing dramatically.

Consistency is especially important to the growing wholesale roaster. The market is loyal to local companies, so it will sometimes forgive minor imperfections in a small wholesale roaster’s coffee. But as you expand out of your local market, the importance of demonstrating consistency increases, especially as consumers become more educated and their demand for a dependable product grows. People are more tuned than ever to the taste of their morning coffee. Any retailer can confirm that their most loyal patrons place the consistency of the coffee high on the list of why they keep coming back.

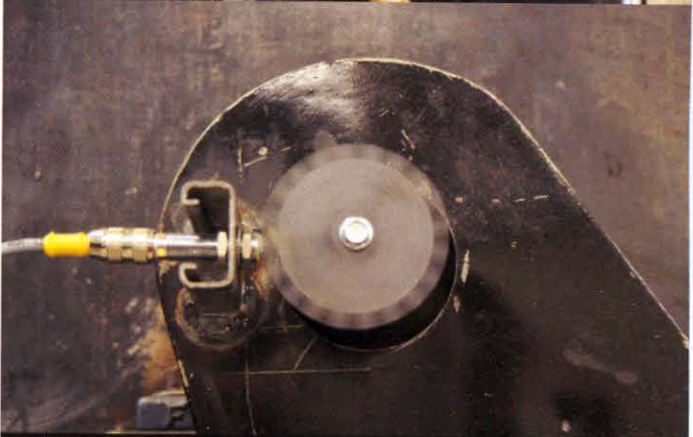
Your customers, whether a chain of cafés or just one shop, need you to be reliable for them to succeed, in turn making you successful. “Consistency comes from being able to manage the energy inputs during a roast,” says Whitley. This means that your ability to reproduce your product is directly proportional to your ability to adjust the many parameters of the roaster. Adjustments made to settings such as drum speed, cooling fan, airflow and flame have become much easier to track and change. Frequency drives and actuators allow you to make small but impactful adjustments to RPMs and valve positions with the touch of a finger or the turn of a knob.

In the past, changing your drum speed could be a bear and cost you hours of production as you tracked down the necessary sprockets and adjusted the chain before finding out you needed the drum to go just a little faster. Now, with a frequency drive, you can quickly adjust the drum by 1 RPM if need be.

## EFFICIENCY

Efficiency is important to roasters of every size. To put it bluntly: It’s all about the money. Naturally, the artist in every roaster has a knee-jerk reaction to that statement; specialty coffee is about the romance of the bean, and efficiency is not romantic.

But if your operation can become more efficient without negatively affecting the coffee, you can directly increase the value of your product to the customer. It will allow you to spend more time in the cupping room improving your skills as a taster. And it will save you money on production, giving you the opportunity to invest more into the quality of your green coffee.



**PORTLAND ROASTING’S NEW TECHNOLOGY:** (from top) An old burner that used a substantial amount of energy and slowed down roast times; checking a batch for color; the yellow sensor reads drum speed, which can be reduced or increased at the touch of a button; the new, more efficient burner, which reduces roast time and produces a “cleaner”-tasting roast.

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