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Bosch Tassimo TAS8520GB coffee machine

A perfect blend?

by Chris Haslam published on 3 July 2009

Bosch and Tassimo promise freshly brewed hot drinks - from Twinings green tea and Milka hot chocolate to Starbucks filter and Kenco cappuccinos - but can this table top vending machine deliver designer drinks tastier than the office canteen?

At 20cm wide the Bosch is mercifully compact and nestled nicely on our worktop. It's also a handsome devil, with just enough tech detailing - LCD screen, bright LEDs - to keep us interested without looking like a hi-fi. It's also superbly built - the rear mounted water tank is robust and features a BRITA filter, the buttons are solid and the lid mechanism closes with a satisfying thud.

Turn it on and the LCD display lights up and helps you through the options. Once the 1.8ltr water tank is full you'll be prompted to insert a T-Disc (T stands for Tassimo), stick a cup under the spout and push the big green button. Thanks to a pump and heating element inside there's no waiting, it's ready to go instantly.

The T-Discs sit neatly in the slot and a built-in reader scans the disc's bar code to discover what flavour drink it is and adjusts the amount of water/pressure to suit.

The Bosch is a simple, well designed machine and takes no effort at all to use. The big button does all the work, the indicator symbols are clear and the LCD screen shows how long before drinks are ready and even offers top-ups. It's just a shame they've wasted a great machine on such a disappointing drinks system.

As a basic coffee maker the Tassimo does an OK job; it has the big brands - Starbucks, Kenco, Carte Noire - and can knock out an acceptable espresso or filter coffee in just 20 seconds. But if



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you want a cappuccino you have to use a concentrated milk disc to provide the froth. It's convenient, but the results make an in-flight coffee taste somewhat sophisticated.

But Tassimo isn't just about coffee; they also offer a variety of tea and hot chocolate delights. The chocolate actually scored points for being thick, creamy and super sweet, but the tea was nothing more than vending machine fodder.

Our other big bugbear with Tassimo is all the waste. After making two cappuccinos and two hot chocolates we were left with eight landfill clogging plastic discs. We might live in a disposable society, but the amount of plastic used with the T-Discs just seems unnecessary.

As for pricing, a box of 16 discs cost £1.99 to £3.49 from the Tassimo website. They are also available in supermarkets and discounts are pretty common. In total we counted 37 different drinks, so you're spoilt for choice. If you like that sort of thing.

VERDICT

As a piece of kit it's hard to fault the Bosch TAS8520GB. It's good looks and small footprint are matched by a quality build and smooth operation.

We're not as impressed with Tassimo though. The big plastic T-discs just seem unnecessarily wasteful, and unlike Nespresso the results don't warrant the waste. If you're not fussy about a thick crema on your espresso, or authentic frothy cappuccinos you'll enjoy the huge range of brands and flavours available, but don't expect restaurant quality.

If you're already a Tassimo fan and fancy an upgrade the Bosch is perfect, but for everyone else it's worth asking yourself when you last enjoyed anything dribbled from a vending machine?

At a glance

What is it?

Coffee machine

Good

Quality build, great features, idiot-proof operation, choice of drinks

Bad

So-so results, loads of waste

Verdict

Bosch has built a fantastic machine that looks great and does the business, just a shame the Tassimo system doesn't measure up

Price £160

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10