

COMPACT GRINDER REVIEW (A CLOSER LOOK)



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Overview

I was asked to review a range of compact grinders for Bella Barista. I was a little nervous about such a review, partly because there are some fairly poor cheap grinders out there and I had visions of having to spend time with quite a few of them. Luckily the parameters for this review covers only 4 grinders with price points from £125 to £306 at the time of writing. Looks like the people at BB took to heart my mumblings about not having really cheap grinders in stock.

Now I have often said that you can't get a decent grinder for less than £150 and you will usually have to spend a lot more, so I am a little sceptical about grinders at the cheaper end of the scale. I was also looking forward to playing with the MAHLKÖNIG Vario. This is the current darling of the compact grinders and sells like "Hotcakes", whatever they are.

So from left to right (in the photo on the right) are:

- MAHLKÖNIG Vario
- Eureka Mignon
- Ascaso metal polished i1
- Ascaso metal black i2

My objective was not to complete a highly detailed review of each grinder covering all its technical features, You will find this type of review in abundance on the web in true sales, or enthusiast sites, together with a listing of capabilities, myths & pseudo science. Sometimes reviews cover an afternoon's use of the grinder and have only positive things to say, or worse still are by an enthusiastic owner who has just "upgraded".

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I wanted to live with each one for 3 or 4 days making lots of coffees for myself and friends. In short I wanted to get as close as possible to the "ownership" experience. You will read good and bad about each grinder, hopefully remembering that all grinders have good and bad points. If you find a grinder that doesn't have good and bad points...well it's probably because you have not been told about them yet!

I start my reviews with the cheapest grinder first and save the best/most expensive till last. All grinders were tested with exactly the same coffee and shots pulled on my Izzo Alex Duetto twin boiler machine at 93C.

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compact grinder 1 closer look v3.doc

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The Ascaso Metal Black i2

Picking it up it was a medium weight grinder with a fairly weedy 145W motor and black aluminium case. The power cable was shorter than would be ideal, because you don't want extension cords in the kitchen. I plugged it in and after checking the burrs were free with no foreign objects in them, fired her up without beans. I must admit to having to do a double take at this point, because the thing sounded truly agricultural and quite loud. I thought 'this can't be right', unfortunately, it was!

Grind adjustment is via a knurled wheel on the right, it's quite easy to turn and half a turn gave around 4 seconds extra on the pour, so it is quite a fine adjuster. However, this does mean more than 20 full turns of the knob to move from espresso to french press coffee!

"The Ascaso i2 is unpleasant to use, produces substandard results and is not recommended."

I placed some coffee in the hopper and eventually got it dialled in. I was hoping it would be quieter when actually grinding beans, but sadly this was not the case. I actually drink different types of coffees, sometimes changing during the day sometimes a different coffee every day. This actually made me realise that with no numbers or reference points on the knob apart from a directional indicator for finer or coarser grind, it would be difficult to quickly move to a setting appropriate for the particular coffee being ground. E.g. If I was drinking a Brazilian on day 1 with a fairly coarse espresso grind, then on day 2 changed to a Monsooned Malabar with a much finer grind requirement, I would need to remember a few things. Firstly, what the last coffee I was using was and then in this specific example to move 1.5 –2 turns finer. I would also have to remember the (1/2 turn) slack in the worm gear. So if the last direction I had moved the knob was finer then the above would be true...If the last



direction I had moved the knob was coarser then I would need to go 2 – 2.5 turns finer. Worse still if I couldn't remember which coffee it was I was using last. You may think this is a small thing, but it is wasteful of coffee and can become annoying. In fairness though, you would get used to it over time.

The Ascaso people for some reason must have thought it was a good idea to make the portafilter actuated press button switch with quite a strong spring. **This meant you had to physically hold the grinder to prevent it toppling over for the duration of the grind.** You would want to do this anyway, by placing one hand on the hopper, because the popcorning of coffee beans from the cheap conical burrs continually threatened to push the bean hopper from the top of the grinder. There being no screw to keep the hopper in place, this quickly became very annoying.

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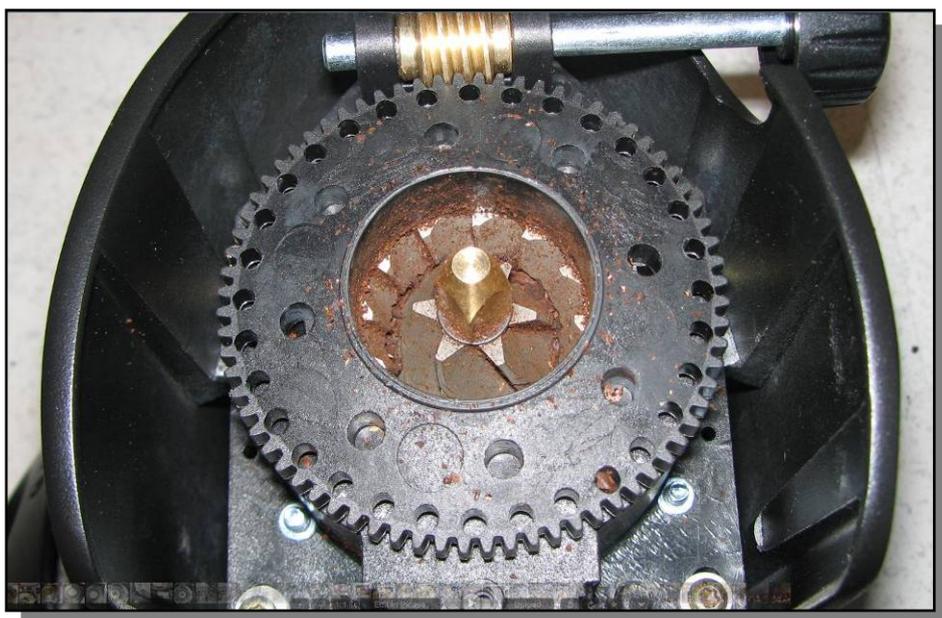
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The Ascaso Metal Black i2 – cont.

So with all the bad things about the grinder so far you might be expecting it to produce a superb grind, well you'd be wrong. Grind quality from those cheap conical burrs was very inconsistent, producing fine and coarse particles. You could clearly taste fines in the cup and the coffee produced was muddy lacking the full range of flavours in proper proportion with a hole in the midrange of flavours and over extracted flavours elsewhere. Grinds were not fluffy and didn't compress much (if at all) when tamped.

Internal examination (as far as I could be bothered to go), showed the same internals as used in quite a few brands of cheap grinder, some often "highly recommended" (mistakenly in my opinion) in forums. You may well read the comment "*the grinder was perfectly capable of choking my machine at its finest setting*", this is not necessarily the mark of a good grinder, because any cheap burr set will probably be able to achieve this. Choking and inconsistent particle size, are in fact closely related!

Here is a picture of the **plastic** burr carrier and cheap conical burr set. I lacked the will to disassemble it any further.



Coffee ground with this grinder gave a fairly consistent pour and fair crema, although as mentioned the cup quality was seriously lacking.

Conclusion.

*This was a £125 grinder, so I was not expecting much and it's true to say I was not disappointed. **The Ascaso i2 is unpleasant to use, produces substandard results and is not recommended.** If you cannot afford anything better, wait until you can, then buy a more expensive grinder.*

The Ascaso Metal Polished i1

You would be forgiven for thinking this is the same as the Ascaso metal Black i2, but with a shiny case. Fortunately that's where you would be wrong. **This is a completely different grinder and in a different class from the i2.**

The case is a polished aluminium finish and looks pretty good with a nice retro feel. It's quite a compact grinder (as can be seen in the photo) and ideal for the smaller kitchen. It's a fair bit heavier than the i2 with a beefy 250W motor. The motor is quite smooth and powerful, it's not the quietest grinder in the world, but it's OK.

It has a decent flat burr set with a brass (not plastic) top burr carrier. Grind adjustment is via a knurled wheel on the right, it's quite easy to turn and half a turn gave around 4 seconds extra on the pour, so it is quite a fine adjuster. However, this does mean more than 20 full turns of the knob to move from espresso to french press coffee! The flat burrs have the added advantage of **not** popcorning the beans and forcing the bean hopper off the top of the grinder as in the i2.

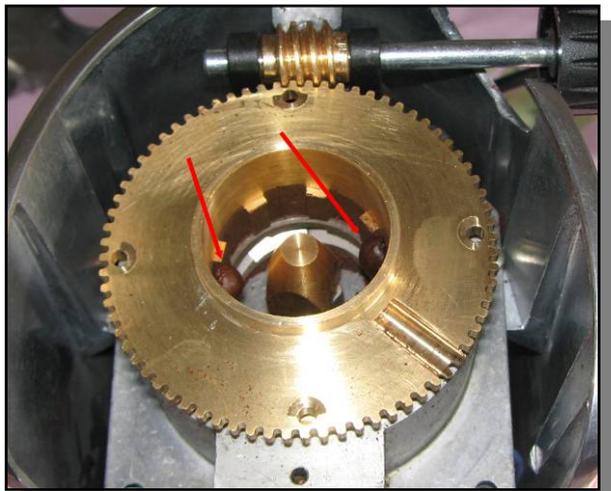
Again as in the i2, with no numbers or reference points on the knob apart from a directional indicator for finer or coarser grind, it would be difficult to quickly move to a setting appropriate for the particular coffee being ground. The mechanism for adjustment being similar there was also the same (1/2 turn) slack in the worm gear.

Being heavier, it doesn't try to topple over when the portafilter actuated button is pushed. The addition of a timer allowed a single press to start a timed grind operation. The timer is on the side of the grinder, very accessible and very easy to adjust, **probably one of the nicer timer adjusters I have come across.**

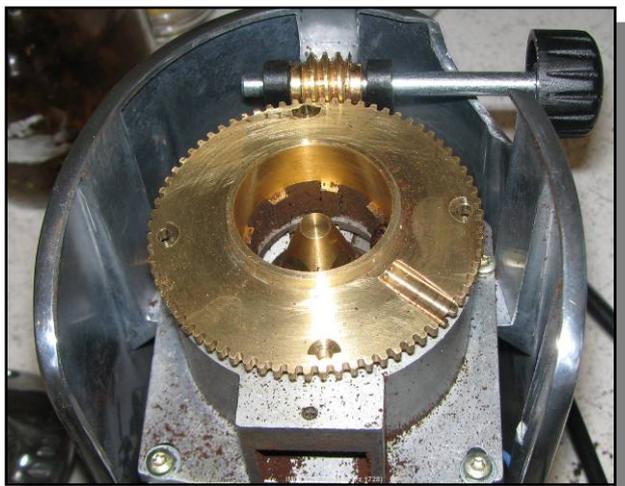


The Ascaso Metal Polished i1 – cont

The point at which the hopper attached to the grinder was a little annoying, for some reason they had some strange ridges which were just the right width to trap some beans

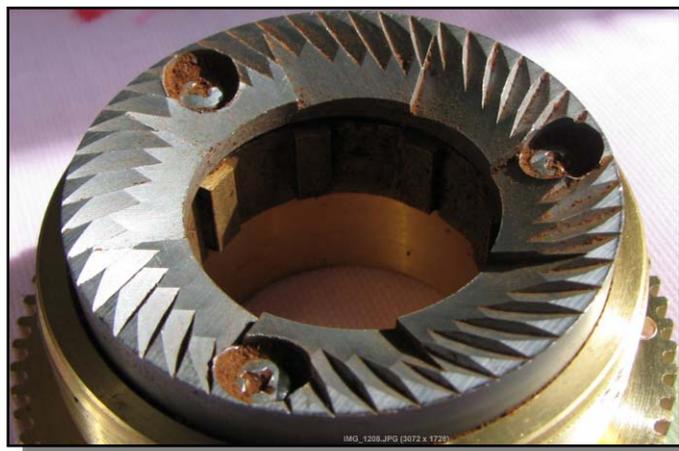


OK it's a minor annoyance and won't cause huge problems although you would want to clear them from time to time. It does baffle me as to why they put these ridges in one wonders if these companies properly test their products?

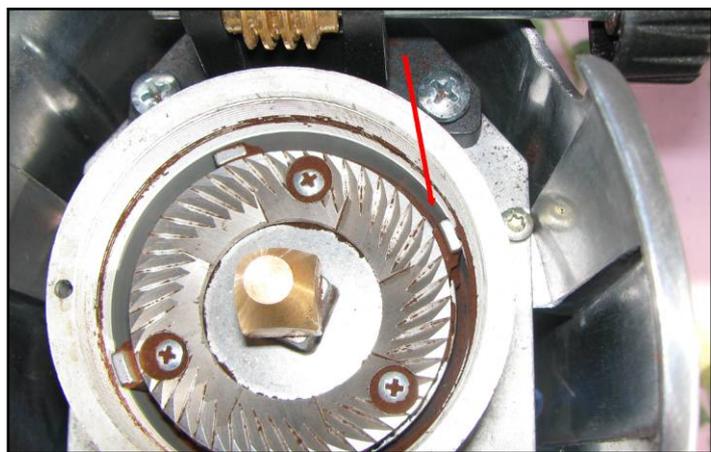


Prior to using the vacuum cleaner, a few stray grounds on the base of the burr carrier. The gap around this, leads to the motor. It would be a good idea to vacuum this area on a monthly basis (it's only 1 screw to remove the cover). The area cannot be sealed as ventilation is required for the motor.

As can be clearly seen from the photos, the top burr carrier is heavy brass (not plastic) and the burrs are not only large (54mm), but good quality.



The fixed burr carrier on the motor is of equally good quality and the gap where the sweep arms run is small, so there is the minimum of retained coffee within the chamber.



When I disassembled the grinder, I did find the worm gear and burr threads benefitted from a light smear of Dow Corning Molycote 111, but I suppose that's the engineer in me.

The Ascaso Metal Polished i1 – cont

Grind quality from the i1 was a world apart from the poor grind of the i2 and was significantly better. The burrs ground coffee quickly and efficiently, the powerful 250W motor was more than ample for the task and it was quieter than the i2. There is a little grind retention, so grinding out a gram or so of coffee before use removes any stale grinds.

The flat burrs produced a much more consistent grind, there was some variance, but not enough to be a problem. There were very little fines in the cup and the coffee produced had a broader range of flavour in good proportion. Grinds were a little fluffier than the i2 and did compress a little when tamped. Coffee ground with this grinder gave a consistent pour and very good crema, it was an easy grinder to live with. Sure the grind was not as good as the Vario or the Mazzer Mini E, but it wasn't bad and costs around £400 less than a Mini E!

Conclusion.

This was a £189 grinder, so again I wasn't expecting much, but the i1 actually exceeded my expectations in quite a positive way. If this is all your budget will stretch to, you could do far worse than this grinder. It is probably the minimum priced grinder where cup quality, performance and longevity would be acceptable. It was also the most physically compact of the grinders tested with a nice retro look.

Checking the prices on the web, it seems that Bella Barista will be around £40 cheaper than the usual £229 price for this grinder, which I consider overpriced. At £189 I think it's about right.

Eureka Mignon (Conte Valero)

I first used one of these many years ago for about 4 days to produce hundreds and hundreds of cups of coffee, together with a Mazzer Mini E. I liked the grinder then and I still like it today. It is not quite as compact as the Ascaso grinders, but it is still small enough to fit comfortably into any kitchen. The main difference you notice in lifting the grinder into place is how much heavier it is, **it was in fact the heaviest grinder out of the 4 on test.**

The motor is a powerful 225W based on the label at the base and it is fairly quiet, with the MAHLKÖNIG Vario being the quietest grinder on test.

It has a simple portafilter push start mechanism for grinding, just above the forks. This starts the timed operation, the duration of which is varied by a knurled adjuster underneath the grinder. It would be far better if this adjuster was in a more convenient position though. To stop grinding early, the main switch is simply flipped off.

"In the cup...it delivers!"

One of the nicest features of this grinder is the adjustment dial on the top left. It's easy to rotate and can go to French press in around 2 full revolutions of the grind adjuster.



Very fine adjustments are easy to make, the grind doesn't drift and because the dial is clearly numbered the settings are quite repeatable as long as you remember to take up any worm gear slack (of which there is a very small amount). The adjuster actually moves the lower burr (I think the motor assembly as well) not the upper burr. This has the advantage of allowing the grinder/grind chamber and burrs to be cleaned without affecting grind adjustment.

With coffees that had to be ground finer, it could become a little bit clumpy, forming rounded cubes of coffee. This was due to the small grind path (to retain less grinds) forming fine coffees into these "cubes"...static was less of an issue. This was not a problem as I ground the coffee into a "ring" mounted in the portafilter (see later). Also, as with most grinders, stirring the ground coffee breaks up any clumps, evens the distribution and improves the extraction, I use the free stirrers available most high street coffee shops.

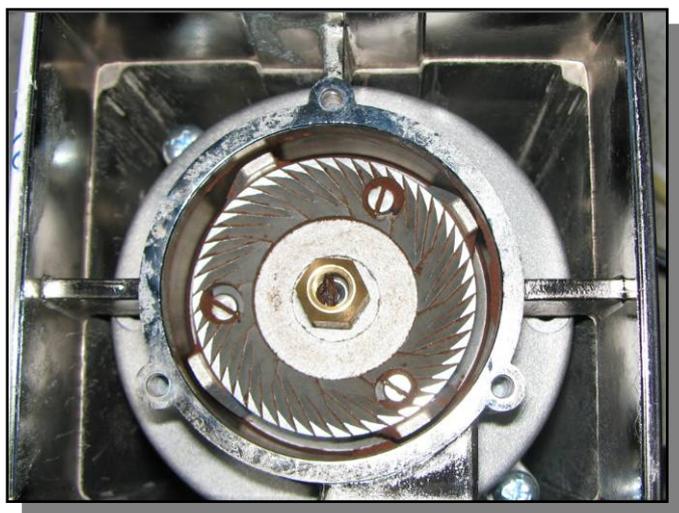
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Eureka Mignon (Conte Valero) – cont.

Below is the lower burr carrier of the Eureka Grinder and it is this that moves when the grind is adjusted (unlike most grinders which move the top burr). The 50mm burrs are well formed and sharp with a long path and short crush feed. The grinds are of very good quality, this is not surprising as the burrs are very similar to the Mazzer Mini E in design and quality.



The sweep arms and chamber around the lower burr are compact with a short grind path, minimising the amount of retained grinds

The top burr shown below is quickly removed via 3 screws on the metal burr carrier that forms the top plate of the grinder. Access for cleaning is quick and easy, without affecting the grind settings.



The sharp 50 mm flat burrs gave a consistent grind with a range of particle distribution similar to a Mazzer Mini E. In the cup the coffee had clarity of taste superior to any of the other grinders tested, including the Vario. Flavours were complete and faithful to the coffee type being used. Grinds were a little fluffier than the i1 and did compress when tamped. Coffee ground with this grinder gave a consistent pour and very good crema, it was an easy grinder to live with, with grind and cup quality almost indistinguishable from the Mazzer Mini E for £250 less!

Conclusion.

*This is a £250 grinder if you go for a solid colour (£30 extra for the chrome finish). I think it comes in a range of colours including gloss black, creamy white, matt black and red. I think it's a waste of money to pay extra for the chrome, but that's a personal choice, plus the gloss black looked very good to me. The Eureka Mignon is mechanically simple, heavy, well built, with a very good set of burrs and totally met my requirements for cup quality. I believe it would be difficult if not impossible to find a better grinder for £250. Sure it doesn't have the electronic cleverness of the Vario, or any fancy features, it's perhaps is a little square and unattractive...**BUT in the cup it delivers and has a robust feel that gives some confidence that it will be happily grinding your coffee for many years to come.***

This grinder has my star buy rating, simply because it's ideal for home use and gives a good quality result, no matter how expensive your machine. You would have to spend an awful lot of money to significantly improve on the grind quality of the Eureka!

The MAHLKÖNIG Vario

I was really looking forward to using this grinder and was saving the best until last. The specifications were impressive as was almost everything I had read on the internet. The first thing I did with the grinder was take out the top burr carrier to have a look at these fabulous ceramic burrs I had been reading so much about. Perhaps I shouldn't have done this, as I was a little surprised by what I found (see later).

The grinder was not as heavy as the Eureka and about the same weight as the Ascaso i1, the body was a quite pleasing combination of metal and plastic and I must say that aesthetically the grinder looked really good to me. The features on the grinder are also impressive with 3 programmable timers for espresso, drip and French press, plus a manual mode. It has a doserless clip in container and another than can hold a quantity of grounds for later use. **The portafilter (PF) holder only worked to a point**, a lighter bottomless PF was held at a steep angle, but was fairly secure. A normal heavy PF was in danger of falling out and I would recommend the PF is held in place during the grind. It also had the Innovative twin arm cam adjustment for grind. This followed up with belt drive, sleep mode, clip in bean hopper and safety switch...**gave a veritable feast of “must have” features in a grinder.**

“...I know, you can sense a BUT coming”

I then tried some coffee in the grinder and was deeply impressed at the speed of grind, the lack of clumps or static (although you get a little on finer ground coffees). **It was also extremely quiet**, either other manufacturers are lying about the noise in decibels of their grinders or the MAHLKÖNIG people are being very conservative. **I can truly say I have not come across such a quiet grinder before.**

The motor is a powerful 250W, based on the label at the base and the MAHLKÖNIG Vario was the quietest grinder on test. As I was setting up the grind of the Vario, starting to get the shot times right and seeing impressive crema!.....I'm thinking, good grief this



knocks the Mazzer Mini E into a cocked hat....it's so good, so fast, so quiet so practical, should I get one? I honestly felt that this grinder was a home users dream, dosing was spot on with the exact same amount being delivered each time...It was a fantastic achievement for the current price of £306 at Bella Barista, especially considering the plethora of positive comments and reviews on the web.

.....I know, you can sense a BUT coming

Here is where the review gets difficult, because to be honest, I did not expect to be writing this and initially, I thought I must be wrong. This grinder has had about the most positive reception of any new grinder, or new coffee products ever and the home user needs a great grinder at a realistic price with Mazzer Mini Es and similar grinders being so expensive nowadays.

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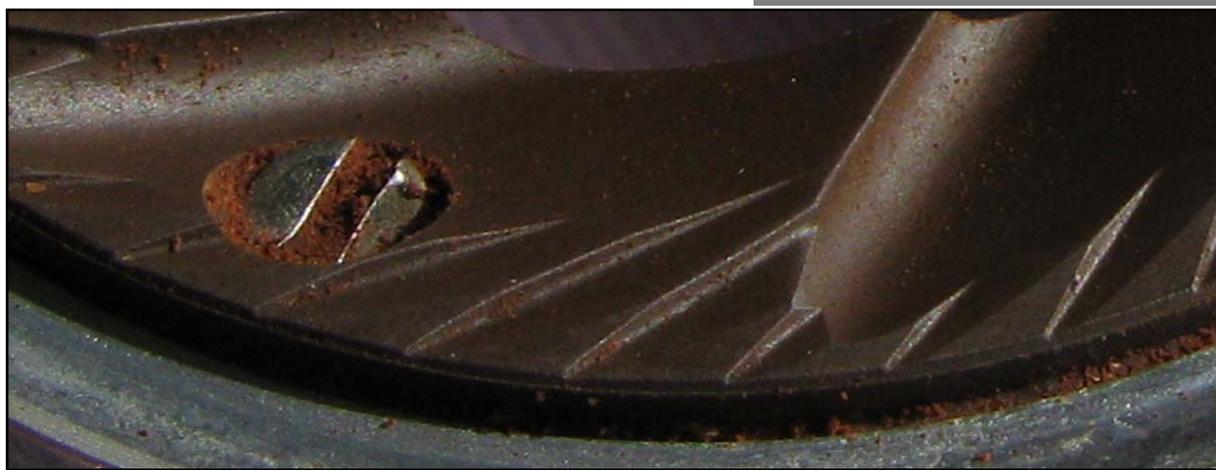
The MAHLKÖNIG Vario – cont.

I tried the espresso and to my surprise it was not as good as the Eureka, or my Mazzer Mini E, it fell a little too short of what I would expect. I then had an americano; I find stretching the espresso out in a long drink helps identify the flavour profiles quite well. The taste had a slight lack of clarity and breadth of flavour with a slight muddiness, in the cup; results were definitely different to the Eureka and my Mazzer Mini E. For me personally this “difference” meant not as good.

Quite concerned that perhaps there was something wrong with me, my taste or some other factor...I invited a friend round (he had also seen the burrs of the Vario a few days ago). The first thing I did was show him 2 piles of espresso grinds on a plate and asked him what he thought. He also has a Mazzer Mini E and correctly identified the Mazzer Mini E grinds vs. the Vario ones by feel in a few seconds. Interestingly each of the grinders was set to pull exactly the same shot times for the same quantity of coffee. The difference is something like, soft for the Mazzer vs. sharp/angular for the Vario... Of course this is no reason for a coffee to taste good or bad. I made him 2 americanos (Mazzer vs. Vario) and unfortunately he identified the same differences in the cup as I did (he also found problems with the espresso). The important point to make here is; *his conclusions were similar to my private worries, BUT at the time, he believed I thought the Vario coffees tasted great and I had no concerns at all.*

He said “it tastes different, the Vario coffee doesn’t taste bad exactly, but it seems to lack the clarity and fullness of flavour of the Mazzer or the Eureka” (we had compared the Eureka with the Mazzer a few days before). We both agreed the Vario coffee was slightly less bitter (also slightly muddy), but put that down to the slight muting of flavours overall.

The Vario grinds appeared to have a slightly wider size distribution than the Eureka or Mazzer and I suspect more ultra-fines in the cup from the taste/texture of the coffee being drunk. I can only speculate why this might be happening. The ceramic burrs didn’t seem particularly sharp to me (the grinder was new). The crush zone was quite large and steep, with the bladed grind/cut zone small in proportion. These factors could explain the sharp and angular feel to the grind, plus the slight muddiness (caused by ultra-fines?) in the cup



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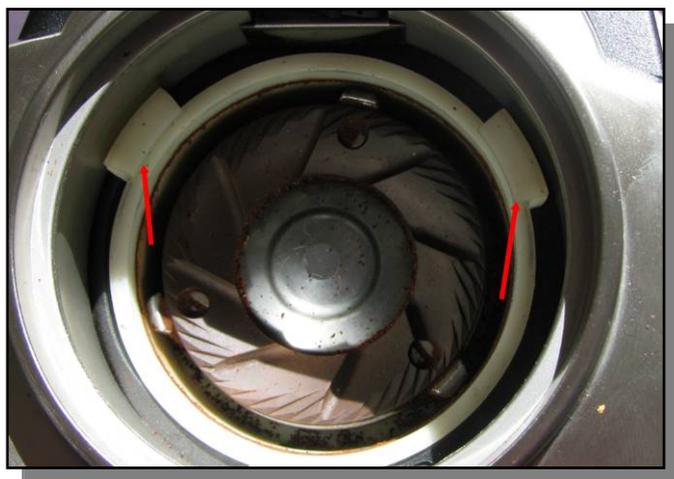
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The MAHLKÖNIG Vario – cont.

The sweep arms and chamber around the lower burr is compact with a very short grind path, giving almost no retained grinds.

The top burr (shown below) is quickly removed by twisting out of the plastic burr carrier holder. This can actually be quite stiff and hard to remove, so a special tool should be supplied by MAHLKÖNIG and is in fact available as an aftermarket product. Certainly most women would not have the strength in their fingers to remove it. I don't know why they chose plastic and would have liked to have seen brass here instead with a different kind of locking mechanism (reverse screw down).



The photo above shows 2 of the 3 plastic lugs under which the top burr carrier is twisted.

The only other real area of concern is the grind adjustment arms, there is a Macro and Micro adjustment of grind using 2 arms attached to cams that raise and lower the burr carrier. The mechanism seems to be over complicated and possibly not as durable as more conventional methods. This could be a very unfair observation though, because you cannot know for sure and the Gene Café roaster (mostly plastic) has proven to be much more durable than I ever imagined. I do think MAHLKÖNIG may have tried to be too clever with this innovation and by definition arms with a limited range of movement, must limit the range of adjustment. **I found that even on the coarsest adjustment it was far too fine for french press coffee** and only just suitable for drip coffee. I did try french press coffee and the

result was very poor, hugely muddy and almost impossible to finish with loads of sludge and fines. *I should add that the grinder achieved espresso grinds at the same settings the majority of people on the web seem to be using, so it was not set to be excessively fine.* A single adjustment dial, would have allowed a much larger (continuous) range of adjustment, and allowed a simpler and stronger adjustment mechanism internally. So yes the Macro Micro adjusters seemed a good innovation, but unfortunately, does not seem to deliver in practice.

Conclusion.

This is a £306 grinder and is a fantastic achievement delivering almost everything you would want for home use. What it does well, it does better than anything else I have ever used and was superior in every way, but for 3 important areas; cup quality, grind adjustment & burr carrier assembly. I believe this could be easily fixed to make this one of the best home grinders available (probably). I would like to see:

- *Precision high quality Steel burr option, with a more conventional design, trading speed of grind for a gentler journey of the bean*
- *A single large numbered dial/knob on the side, giving a wider range of adjustment and operating a less complex/stronger mechanism internally. Not Micro and Macro adjusters with limited movement*
- *Using a brass/metal holder for the top burr and carrier*

If this was your first grinder or you were upgrading from a substandard grinder, then you would be overjoyed with the Vario. It is an excellent product and as always these are simply my opinions and there will be huge numbers of satisfied users who will tell you how wrong I am. However, my Mazzer Mini E is back in the kitchen and I am reluctant to pull shots with the Vario, wanting coffee ground by my Mazzer....so perhaps my subconscious is also telling me something!

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Supplementary Information

It's important to mention that with all grinders except the Vario, I had to use a portafilter insert as shown to reduce the amount of grinds falling outside the portafilter and onto the counter. The Vario was the only grinder that did not need it that badly (with it in place, it was difficult to see how much coffee had dispensed), but **Once the Vario grind times were set up, using a portafilter insert made it completely mess free. A quick insert can be made by forming a strip of thin card in a circle and using sticky tape.**

In addition ground coffee from all grinders was stirred in the portafilter prior to pulling the shot to ensure a reasonably even distribution and better extraction. The Mazzer mini E used was mine, is 4 years old, and the burrs are at 40% of their useful service life. It has also been modified as in the link below.

<http://coffeetime.wikidot.com/mazzer-mini-e-modifications>

The mod prevents clumping, reduces grind retention, but the increased throw of grinds into the doserless funnel results in some particle size sorting due to

physics as the particles fall. This is remedied by giving the grinds a quick stir for a second or 2 (a thin coffee stirrer, or similar can be used for this). **The Vario needed this less than the other grinders, but even so the beginning of the extraction was markedly improved on the Vario by giving the grinds a stir.** Without the stir, the extraction could often appear to be a little variable at the beginning then settle. I attributed this to fines settling during the infusion of the coffee puck.



The 4 review grinders compared with my Mazzer Mini E + short hopper (left)

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Conclusions

As a reviewer, have the luxury of using these grinders at no cost and with the full knowledge they were going back. They are all brand new with sharp burrs, so I can only make an educated guess how they will fare in the longer term. As a non owner, I don't wear the "new owners" glasses and have no personal investment in any particular grinder. I have used quite a few grinders and tried to view them dispassionately. The MAHLKÖNIG Vario was the most troubling to review, because it's human nature to be quite reluctant to fly in the face of almost overwhelming positive opinion on the web. It would have been easier to have told you how brilliant it was and produced just another sales review.

I am very concerned that when spending from £189–£306, you make the best decision first time round. There were only 4 grinders within this line up and I did compare all of them to my Mazzer Mini E, somewhat unfairly, as the mini E now costs over £500 and is a commercial quality grinder. There are many other grinders on the market and at some point or another I will have been asked about many of them by Bella Barista. A lot are "too cheap and not good enough to stock"; others are overkill for the home user. Hopefully another "star buy" grinder is unlikely to have been overlooked in the process and the table below helps you gather your thoughts.

Relative Grind/cup Quality	Grinder	Pros	Cons
1	Mazzer Mini E	Commercial grade, will last for ever, excellent grind quality,	It's very expensive, some quirks that can be modded out
2	Eureka Mignon	Almost Mini E grind quality and decent build quality...star buy at £250	Aesthetically may not be to everyone's taste, can produce a clumpy grind at the finer settings (overcome by stirring). A little grind retention.
3	MAHLKÖNIG Vario	Fantastic set of features, very quiet, and totally suited to home use.	Questions over materials and longevity. I felt it did not deliver sufficiently well "in the cup". Would have to be internally adjusted by the user for either French Press, or Espresso, insufficient movement in external adjusters to switch between the two as required.
4	Ascaso i1	Not bad quality, about the minimum for an entry level grinder	Unless it's the most you want to afford, go the extra £60 for the Eureka. Some grind retention.
Very poor	Ascaso i2	None	Unpleasant to use, produces substandard results...not recommended.

Final Thoughts

Grinders tend to be an emotive subject and especially when an owner has shelled out quite a few large ones, they can be understandably defensive about its capabilities. There also seems to be this belief that a grinder can be cheap for french press (Cafetierre) coffee and this is true, but only to a point. This point is so important that it deserves clarification.

When you are starting out, perhaps making the move from instant, to real coffee, then a cheap blade or burr grinder of around £30 upwards will do fine for the initial forays into French press or drip coffee. Your beans will probably be coming from the supermarket and your tastes will be developing. After a time and once you have become more confident/demanding and are buying high quality beans from an online roaster or roasting your own.....then a decent grinder will begin to make a significant difference in the cup for any preparation method used. Good grind quality will produce a fuller clearer/cleaner cup with much improved flavour.

The purchase of a prosumer espresso machine is usually an event that makes people rapidly understand that the cheap grinders simply don't cut it at all (often they simply won't work to give a decent pour at all). The next eye opener is that the more expensive grinder makes far superior French press or drip coffee.

If you are a complete beginner or not using an espresso machine and are not sure how much you like coffee, or how far you might want to take things, none of the grinders reviewed are for you. Go spend £30, see if you really like fresh coffee and are prepared to go to the trouble of even drip or French press preparation methods for a few months. If you find you are and don't constantly reach for the instant coffee.....At least you have only spent £30 and can happily place said grinder on e-bay, losing perhaps a £10 or £15. At this point you want to be buying a grinder of at least the minimum recommended quality in this review....whether you intend buying an espresso machine or not!

The rest is down to you, read the enthusiastic comments on the web, read the negative ones as well, remember the people making these comments may have owned only one cheap grinder before, perhaps it's their first grinder. Read all the commercial/semi commercial reviews, and then think about 3 things.

- I have not come across cheap grinders (especially conical burr ones) sub £150 where I would personally find the results remotely acceptable. I also find these unsuitable for use in prosumer espresso machines. This is especially true as the grinder begins to wear a bit.
- A grinder with the same internals as the i2 used in this review gets an average rating of 8.3 on a popular coffee site, based on a number of **consumer** reviews....and the i2 is a grinder I recommend you **DON'T** buy.
- No grinder is perfect, although with some work from the manufacturer the Vario could be very close to perfect! I will put up with quite a lot of issues, making any modifications and compromises necessary, **as long as the quality in the cup is OK!**

Lastly as with all things, the sky is the limit on grinders and My Mazzer Mini E would be considered a base level grinder amongst some "serious coffee enthusiasts"....sure you can spend £1000's on a grinder, personally I don't believe you need to, and can happily get away with spending £250 at current prices.