

# BARIST-OM

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An essay profiling a working barista who is also a yoga instructor. Includes advice on yoga as a stress reducer for working baristi.

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Your legs burn. Your feet are swollen. Your back is stiff. Your shoulder aches. You feel pummeled, beaten and chewed up. Welcome to the end of the day for most Manhattan baristi. So, what to do? Another espresso shot or maybe you should try doing a Balasana...but more on that later.

Though, coffee slinging, as some like to call it, may seem like casual fun-filled work from the customer's side of the sneeze guard, baristi everywhere know it takes a lot of physical and emotional drive to keep a cafe's atmosphere fun, the coffee flowing and the customers happy. Often a barista finds herself going home at the end of the day in a pain filled daze. "My body never feels good after working a day at the shop", says Amber Tyler a mid-town Manhattan barista. Ms. Tyler has been a barista on and off for approximately two years. "I feel like I've been walking on nails all day."

These laments are all too common throughout the industry. We have creative, educated hardworking people who have to juggle the physical demands of the job while providing quite literally service with a smile. By the time Friday comes it is quite hard to bust out those smiles when your feet feel like tender balloons. However, there are some things that can be done to alleviate and soothe baristi bodies.

Enter Shawna Emerick. [srepisces26@yahoo.com](mailto:srepisces26@yahoo.com) Shawna does something many baristi do...she is a wearer of many hats. During the mornings Shawna can be found handing out smiles with every coffee beverage. During the evening time Shawna soothes tired New Yorkers in an entirely different way. She is a certified yoga instructor and a dancer. She teaches at a midtown NYC studio, a sports club in Riverdale and gives private classes. She has been practicing yoga for quite a while and has been certified for two years.

"There are many poses you can do to relieve the stress of such a physically demanding job." Shawna said that while everyone decompresses in their own way (naps, a glass of wine, a cup of coffee) the following poses can certainly improve a barista's overall well being. She provided us with four basic and easy poses almost anyone can do. She also referred us to [www.yogajournal.com](http://www.yogajournal.com) where all of these poses, their benefits and instructions on how to do them can be found.

The first was the Adho Mukha Svanasana more commonly known as the downward dog pose. [http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/491\\_1.cfm](http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/491_1.cfm) This is the most known of the yoga poses and for good reason. It is according to yoga journal "an all-over, rejuvenating stretch." It is known to relieve stress and fatigue, strengthen and stretch limbs, alleviate headache...the benefits seem endless!

The second was the Balasana or the child's pose. [http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/475\\_1.cfm](http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/475_1.cfm) This pose helps to alleviate back and neck pain while stretching stiffened hips and thighs and is an overall calming and stress relieving pose. It is easy to do and perfect after a long day on your feet.

The third is often referred to as Legs up the Wall but is known in Sanskrit as Viparita Karani

[http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/690\\_1.cfm](http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/690_1.cfm) This pose is key for baristi and it quite simple to do. Long hours spent on our feet can cause them, as well as our legs, to swell, to hurt, to cramp...the list goes on and on. This pose alleviates the stress to the feet and legs.

The fourth is called Cow Face Arms but is known to Yogis as Gomukhasana

[http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/689\\_1.cfm](http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/689_1.cfm) or Gomukhasana Arms since we are focusing on the arm part of the pose. The full version of this pose benefit's the lower and upper body...however if we zone in on the arm part of the pose we find that it benefits the shoulders, arms (triceps) and chest.

This pose will help to stretch out arms and shoulders that have been pulling espresso, bagging beverages and in the process have become tight, cramped and stressed. Cow Face Arms is also a pose we can do at the job!

Of course, as with all exercises, we need to be careful to do the poses correctly. Also some poses may not be ideal for individuals that have existing injuries. Extensive information about each pose can found at the Yoga Journal website or by clicking on the links provided.