

Caffeine High: Space station getting Italian espresso maker (Update)

April 12 2015, by Marcia Dunn



This undated product image made from video provided by Lavazza shows a prototype of Lavazza and Argotec's "ISSpresso" machine. The final version will be the first real Italian espresso machine on The International Space Station. On Monday, April 13, 2015, a version of the coffee maker is scheduled for launch to the International Space Station aboard a supply capsule. (AP Photo/Lavazza)

The next space station grocery run will carry caffeine to a whole new level: Aboard the SpaceX supply ship is an authentic espresso machine straight from Italy.

SpaceX is scheduled to launch its unmanned rocket with the espresso

maker—and 4,000 pounds of food, science research and other equipment—Monday afternoon.

The experimental espresso machine is intended for International Space Station astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti of Italy. It was supposed to arrive in January, shortly after her arrival, so she could get some relief from the station's instant coffee. But it ended up on the back burner after a station shipment from Virginia was lost in a launch explosion.

The espresso maker is dubbed ISSpresso—ISS standing for International Space Station. Italian coffee giant Lavazza joined forces with the Turin-based engineering company Argotec and the Italian Space Agency to provide a specially designed machine for use off the planet. NASA certified its safety.

NASA's space station program deputy manager, Dan Hartman, said it's all part of making astronauts feel at home as they spend months—and even up to a year—in orbit. Already, Mission Control gives astronauts full access to email, phone calls, private video hookups, and live news and sports broadcasts.

"The psychological support is very, very important," Hartman told reporters Sunday. "If an espresso machine comes back and we get a lot of great comments from the crew ... It's kind of like the ice cream thing, right, when we fly ice cream every now and then. It's just to boost spirits. Maybe some rough day, a scoop of ice cream gets them over that hump kind of thing."



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The SpaceX Dragon supply ship also holds experiments for NASA's one-year space station resident Scott Kelly, who moved in a couple weeks ago. Russian cosmonaut Mikhail Kornienko also will remain on board until March 2016.

This will be the California-based SpaceX company's seventh station supply run since 2012, all from Cape Canaveral.

For the third time, SpaceX will attempt to land its leftover booster vertically on an ocean barge. Both previous tests failed.

Improvements to the first-stage booster and floating platform—based on lessons learned from the January and February attempts—should boost the odds of success this time to 75 percent or maybe 80 percent, said Hans Koenigsmann, vice president of mission assurance for SpaceX.

SpaceX's billionaire founder Elon Musk wants to save time and money by reusing the boosters normally discarded in the Atlantic. In fact, the company is transforming a former missile-launching site at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station into a landing pad for its revolutionary flyback boosters.

Monday's launch time is 4:33 p.m. Forecasters put the odds of good weather at 60 percent.

More information: SpaceX: www.spacex.com/

NASA: www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/main/index.html

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