

Cascara Composting Quick Guide

Purpose: Turn fresh coffee peels/pulp/cascara into safe compost instead of leaving them to rot, smell bad, and attract pests. Proper composting uses air, moisture, and dry carbon materials to speed breakdown and reduce environmental problems.

Materials already available on the farm

- Fresh coffee peels/pulp/cascara.
- Dry leaves, prunings, straw, grass, maize stalks, or coffee husk/parchment
- Water
- A shovel or fork
- A shaded, well-drained place.

Step-by-step

1. Collect the peels the same day.

Do not leave them in a wet heap for many days. Fresh material decomposes better when mixed right away.

2. Mix with dry materials.

Use **2 to 3 parts dry material for 1 part fresh peels** by volume. This helps create the right carbon-to-nitrogen balance and keeps the pile airy.

3. Build a medium pile in shade.

Make the pile about 1.2 m high and 1.5 m wide if

possible. Keep it on slightly raised ground so water drains away.fao+1

4. Keep moisture like a wrung-out cloth.

The pile should be damp, not dripping. If water runs out when you squeeze it, add dry material. If it is dusty and dry, add water little by little.

5. Turn the pile often.

Turn **1 to 2 times per week** if possible, or at least regularly enough to keep air inside the pile. Turning is essential because composting without oxygen can stop and become rotten.

Timeline

- **Days 1–8:** The pile should begin warming up.
- **Weeks 2–6:** Active breakdown, with regular turning.
- **Weeks 6–12+:** Cooling and maturation.
- **Ready to use:** When the compost is dark, crumbly, and smells like fresh soil

Good signs

- Warm center in the first days.
- Pile shrinks over time.
- Darker color.
- Earthy smell.
- No standing liquid

Warning signs

- Rotten, sour, or sewage smell.
- Slime, flies, or wet compact layers.
- No heat at all in the first week.
- Water draining from the pile.

What to avoid

- Do not leave fresh peels in wet heaps.
- Do not compost only coffee peels without dry material.
- Do not let rain soak the pile.
- Do not place it near streams or drains.
- Do not apply unfinished compost directly to crops

Simple field rule:

If it is **wet and smelly**, add dry material and turn it. If it is **dry and not heating**, add water and a little more fresh material. If it is **warm, shrinking, and earthy-smelling**, keep the process going