



Isomac Zaffiro

A Closer Look



Overview

The Isomac Zaffiro arrives well packed well packed in a very sturdy cardboard box, there is little chance of this machine getting damaged in transit. It is very well built using high quality components and has a solid feel.

The cup warmer tray is a good size and gives just enough height under standard size kitchen cabinets, although filling with water needs to be done with care.

The steel gauge is quite heavy, very good quality and the portafilters and baskets are of high quality. The Zaffiro is very well built and designed, with high quality components throughout.

Servicing this machine will be very easy; strip down is fast and simple with little potential for error. Pump replacement is simplicity itself, with plenty of access around the pump. Internally the machine is much simpler than heat Exchanger (HX) machines and minor water spillage/leakage is unlikely to cause any damage. This is a good point as most customers will not bother removing the tank for filling.

The Barista equipment supplied free with the Zaffiro, is good quality with all the essential items required to make espressos and is usually an extra expense when buying an espresso machine.

In summary; The Isomac is an excellent machine both for the consumer to use and the reseller to support. It should provide years of reliable service with the minimum of maintenance. Isomac are a major player in the Coffee machine market and have been supplying machines since 1977.

How it arrived and unpacking

Very sturdy box, plenty of room on the inside to pack accessories that will come with the machine. This will allow efficient packing & shipping in a single box (unless a grinder is also ordered)



It is quite easy to get the machine out of the box as there is plenty of space at the sides to reach down and get a good grip.

The Zaffiro comes with a manual that is of the usual poor standard common with these machines. It only covers the basics of machine operation and a very brief description of how to make coffee. Fortunately Bella Barista supplies their own UK written guide to getting the best from the machine and it comes free with their machines! This guide actually covered every aspect of the machines operation, maintenance and cleaning, in addition to extensive instructions on making coffee drinks and foaming milk.

Once in position on the counter the machine looks really nice and does not dominate on standard sized work surface. The machine is on the tall side but there is sufficient room under standard height kitchen cupboards to place espresso/standard cups on the cup warmer tray. The corner positioning of the machine is ideal, especially when located near a sink



Bella Barista
Nene Court, The Embankment, Wellingborough, Northants, NN8 1LD

Tel: 01933 273275

e-mail: clareo@towability.com

Preparing the machine for use

Before you switch on

There is nothing to remove, peel off, portafilter baskets to assemble or any thing else to do other than lift the machine onto the counter, wash the cold water tank, fill it with filtered water.

Flushing the machine before 1st use

I never like the idea of using a machine without thoroughly flushing it through, especially considering that the machine may have stale water from factory testing (many months old), or manufacturing residues, Isomac mention nothing about doing this in their handbook, but this procedure is included in the UK Bella Barista guide "Getting the best from your Zaffiro".

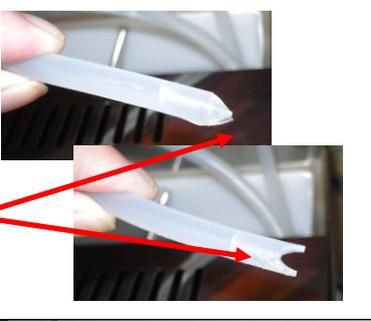
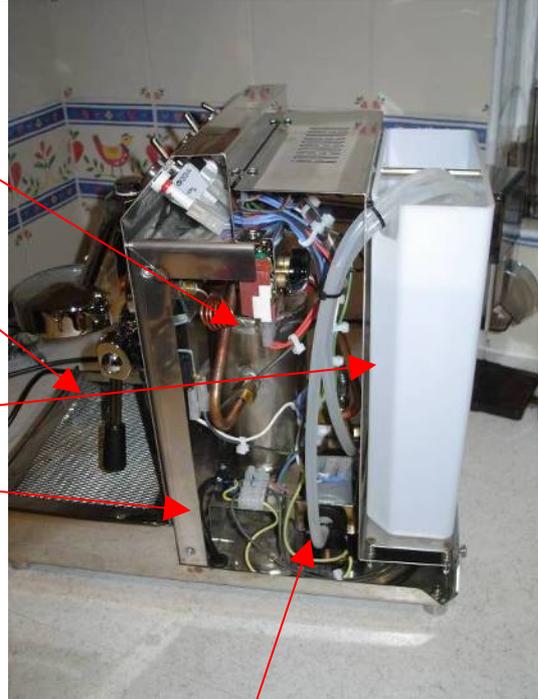
Key Features

| Item/Description | Picture | Comments |
|---|--|---|
| <p>The designers of the hot water/steam could look to improve the design or add an attachment. At the moment the system works, but could be better.</p> <p>Switching on the pump expels water, and if at top of boiler cycle, steam+water vigorously into a container. This water splashes with a risk of scalding. I find it easier to draw hot water into a milk jug, and often even submerge the wand.</p> | <p>A simple accessory could make this much safer and more suitable.</p>  <p>A simple push fit chromed metal sleeve, with a rubber insert at the top and open at the bottom. The water comes out at an angle from the steam wand and would hit the walls of the sleeve, dissipating the energy. This water would then run down the sides and exit the bottom in a much more orderly and safer stream.</p> <p>The accessory would simply be removed before steaming. Much like the milk frothing attachments on some coffee machines</p> | |
| <p>The machine just switches off when water is low via a microswitch sensing the weight of water in the tank. This is set conservatively and there is usually about 500 ml of water or more in the tank when this happens.</p> |  | <p>I shouldn't say this, but if you're in the middle of an espresso shot and it stops, remove the cup tray and press lightly on the tank to finish your shot. Never do this for any other purpose (e.g. drawing water) as you do not want the pump to run dry</p> |
| <p>A source of rattles on my machine was the front of the water tank against the thin dividing steel partition</p> |  | <p>A small piece of foam tape (sticky on one side and stuck onto the steel panel), solved the noise problem.</p> <p>This pad was located between the plastic tank and the steel at the point indicated.</p> <p>We will be talking to Isomac about this</p> |

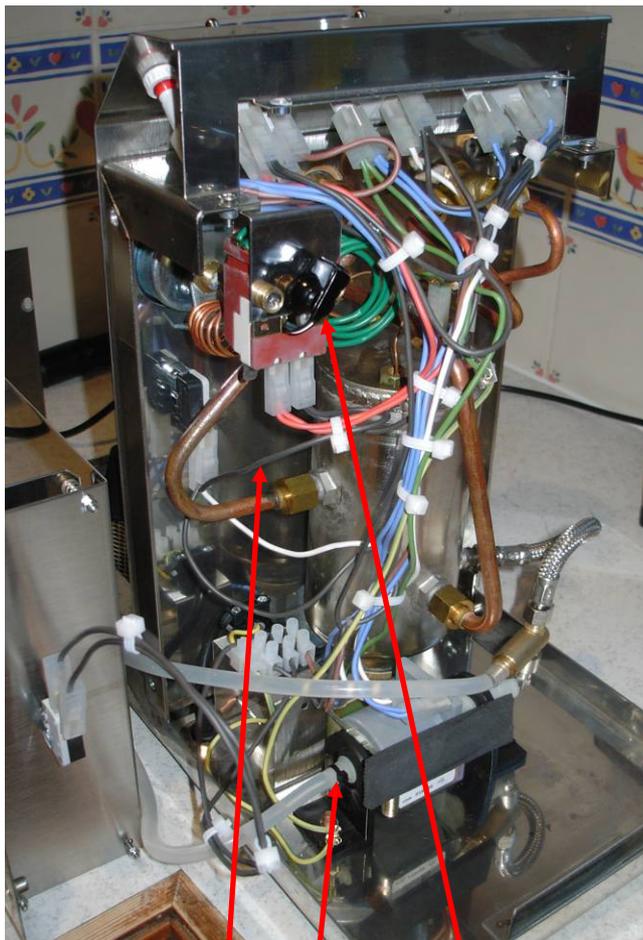
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| <p>The water feed tubes are quite long and have square cut ends. While the in-line water filter is on, there is not a problem. When it was removed (as it will be when exhausted or 1 month old) I had 2 occasions where the tube “sucked” onto the bottom of the tank and obstructed the flow of water to the pump. I have since “cut” my tube in line with the recommendation in the UK user guide.</p> |  | <p>We will be asking Isomac to modify these at the factory</p> |
| <p>Case is easy to remove</p> |  <div data-bbox="943 1167 1442 1364" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><u>Experienced technician approx 20m</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove case 2. remove electrical wiring to pump 3. Remove tubes 4. Pump on floating rubber mounts (looks as if it just pulls out) </div> | |
| <p>High quality internal components</p> | | |
| <p>Large nickel plated brass boiler 0.7 l , plenty of water gives good thermal stability</p> | | |
| <p>Very large drip tray only needs emptying once a day.</p> | | |
| <p>Water tank is nice quality and well finished. 3l capacity although in practice only 2.5l can be drawn before machine switches off</p> | | |
| <p>Case and frame is stainless steel, very heavy gauge, well finished and oozes quality. Looks as good on the inside as the outside</p> | | |
| <p>Steel braided high pressure pipe</p> | | |
| <p>The Isomac is a clean machine in use, the shower screen gets very little grounds after pulling a shot and cleanup is really quite easy.</p> | | |
| <p>2 very small cleaning flushes are all that's required, this means that your not always filling the tank</p> | | |
| <p>All components very accessible, especially the pump. Pump replacement will be an easy and quick job.</p> | | |
| <p>Nice large cup warming tray. It's worth buying some sort of non-slip matting to protect your tray.</p> |  | <p>A piece of perforated non-slip matting works perfectly to stop the tray getting scratched. My own personal Zaffiro cup warmer tray (shown)</p> |

A better look inside the Zaffiro



Everything is easy to reach

Easy access to pump

As this is my own personal machine, I added an adjustment knob to the thermostat spindle (to make any temperature adjustment easy during testing).



Large, high quality nickel plated brass boiler

Sturdy stainless steel internal frame

Please note that your machine will be thoroughly inspected by Bella Barista prior to delivery and they will already have ensured that the machine is operating correctly and the brew temperature adjusted if necessary.

Temperature adjustment can be done by the home user, but please give us a call first as it may be unnecessary. Damage as result of incorrect adjustment will not be covered under warranty (please note correct temperature measurement of brew water is a skilled task, requiring experience and the correct equipment)

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Espresso

The Zaffiro makes consistently good espressos and easily maintains the temperature during the pour. Domestic volumes of espresso one after another will be absolutely no problem with this machine.

Steam Production

The Zaffiro is a strong steamer. The steam wand is well designed, the 2 holes are not too large and are set at an angle so the milk swirls easily, warms quickly and you will have no problems producing copious amounts of microfoam at your first attempt.

Hot Water

The large boiler on the Zaffiro does allow you to draw hot water, however, it is advisable to allow the system to recover before pulling more espressos. This makes it advisable to draw hot water after you have made all your espressos and before switching into steam mode for milk

Final Thoughts

The marriage of the Faema E61 group to the Zaffiro is a very good one and the system works really well when attached to this single boiler non-HX machine. I do a 1oz flush prior to pulling an espresso, mainly to purge the cooler water in the feed pipe to the e61 group. After that I can reliably pull shot after shot of, great espresso.

The machine looks nice and is easy to keep clean, a quick wipe with a damp cloth and a buff with a microfibre cloth is all that's generally required to keep it looking great. The more complex tasks such as backflushing and descaling are actually very easy to do and the supplied UK guide explains how to do them in detail.

The E61 group head is an industry standard (as are many of the components in the machine), so parts such as, pumps, gaskets, shower screens, filter holders, filter holder handles etc. are all a standard size and readily available from multiple suppliers. This also means that the pricing of these spares is highly competitive. ***I had a different make of coffee maker many years ago, the gasket and shower screen for that much cheaper machine was more than 3 times the cost of the same components for the Zaffiro!***

The machine is less complex and runs a lot cooler than HX machines and would be ideal if you have an infrequent need to draw hot water or steam milk (e.g. 6 cappuccinos in a row). The machine actually comes up to steam pressure fairly quickly, although it takes a while to cool down again if you want to make an espresso after steaming.

If you do have a need for; continuous hot water available any time, steam available any time and even while pulling espresso shots. Then you need a Heat Exchanger (HX) machine, such as the Isomac Millennium, Isomac Tea, Izzo Vivi etc. These do cost more, but are built to meet a slightly different consumer need

Overall though, it's a single boiler non heat exchanger machine that is rated as one of the best available. I think you would have to work quite hard to find a better machine, which is why I bought one myself!

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