

Archive of past coffee offerings.

### **Mexico Oaxaca ☐ (Organic)**

Oaxaca (pronounced Wah-Hah-ka), is nearly the most southern Mexican state, almost bordering Guatemala. In the organic riches of southern Mexico's mountainous coffee growing region, indigenous Mixe and Zapotec Indians have grown coffee for over 200 years. Coffee first arrived in Mexico from Cuba at the beginning of the 19th Century. As it turned out conditions in the Oaxacan coastal range couldn't have been better for coffee cultivation: the perfect altitude, warm coastal breezes, forested slopes to provide the necessary shade. The first Oaxaca coffee farms were founded in the 1870's, in the area around el Cerro de Pluma, "Feather Mountain", in the Zapotec hill country above and beyond Pochutla.

This organically grown coffee exhibits lots of milk chocolate notes with slight citrus flavors in the background. It's a very well balanced coffee with a medium acidity and a taste on cinnamon on the finish.

### **Panama Royal Select Decaf, Water Process (Organic)**

I'm not a huge fan of decafs but the Royal Panama Select is an excellent example of what a decaf can be. Unusually bright and balance coffee for a decaf, the Pnaama Select is decaffeinated using the Swiss Water Process. The Swiss Water Process is a method of decaffeinating coffee beans developed by the Swiss Water Decaffeinated Coffee Company. To

decaffeinate the coffee bean by the Swiss Water method, a batch of green (unroasted) beans is soaked in hot water, releasing caffeine. When all the caffeine and coffee solids are released into the water, the beans are discarded. The water then passes through a carbon filter that traps caffeine but lets the coffee solids pass through. The resulting solution, called "green coffee extract (GCE)" by the company, is now available for decaffeinating coffee. New green coffee beans are introduced to the GCE. Since the GCE is coffee solids without caffeine only the caffeine diffuses from the new beans. The GCE passes through proprietary carbon which captures the caffeine. The process repeats, filtering out all the caffeine until the beans are 99.9% caffeine-free. These beans are removed and dried, and thus retain most if not all of their flavor. The Swiss Water Process also avoids the nasty chemical used in some decaffeinating processes. Although the process was pioneered in Switzerland in the 1930s, today the world's only Swiss Water Process decaffeination facility is based near Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Only Swiss Water coffees can be certified organic.

Panama Royal Select Decaf is a very smooth and balanced coffee with really nice chocolate and malt flavors. Flavors do not come across muted as can sometimes happen with decaf.

## **Guatemala El Injerto Special Prep.**

The first owner of this farm was Mr. Jesus Aguirre Panama, who acquired it in 1874. He began cultivating sugar cane to produce crystallized sugar locally known as "panela", corn, beans, and tobacco. During 1900 he started planting coffee, and called this section EL INJERTO (The Grafting), since this was what started the agricultural development in the area.

The current owner is Arturo Aguirre Escobar, representing the third generation of his family. He has worked the farm since 1956, when the production was approximately three hundred (300) bags of 100 pounds.

El Injerto has a total of 750 hectares, 400 of them are between 1,500 and 2,000 meters (4,921.26 - 6,561.82 feet) above sea level, all planted with coffee, fruit orchards, basic grains and ornamental plants. The remaining 350 hectares have been preserved as a thousand-year-old virgin forest, which gives the farm its special climate and adequate conditions to have clean water that springs directly from the mountains. In addition, it constitutes the perfect habitat for flora and fauna; and especially allows the production of coffee in an eco-system preserving our natural environment. The forest area surrounds the coffee plantations. The farm has an annual rainfall of 1800-200 mm per year a relative humidity of 70% and an average temperature of 73°C (23°C). The soils are volcanic, profound, well drained, and with high contents of organic matter.

Guatemala El Injerto Quetzaltenango has always been a farm that produces some of the highest quality coffee in the world. This coffee won 1st place in the 2006 and 2009 Cup of Excellence, 3rd place in 2002, and was the number 6 in the 2009 Roaster's Guild Coffee of the Year.

This 'Special Prepped' lot was hand picked from the highest elevation on the farm and meticulously processed to showcase the best the El Injerto has to offer. This is a Direct Relationship coffee meaning that the roasters travel to the farm and work with the growers to ensure highest quality. Direct Relationship also ensures that the farmer and the workers get

the most money for their product.

## **Ethiopia Amaro Gayo (Organic)**

Amaro Gayo Organic, a wonderful natural coffee, is exported by Asnakech Thomas, Ethiopia's only female miller and exporter, and reputed to be an exceptional, energetic and inspiring woman. Native to the Amaro region, Asnakech decided in 2005 to return to her homeland to improve coffee quality at her mill and in local communities. She is one of the few people to travel weekly between Addis and the coffee areas. The Amaro Mountains are a small range separating the communities of Amaro on the eastern slopes from Nechisar National Park and the lowland tribal areas of Arba Minch in southwest Ethiopia, Sidamo region. The local coffee varieties, relatively light population, waterfalls and highland bamboo forests are among the many unique features of the area.

Amaro Gayo is a washing station where local growers bring their freshly picked, ripe cherry for processing. Asnakech is said to be very strict in selecting which coffees will be processed at her washing station and mill, choosing only ripe and ready cherry. The final step in natural processing, drying, is critically important one. At Amaro drying is carried out on raised African beds, keeping the coffee clean and free of soil, while aerating it from top and bottom. All Amaro Gayo coffee is certified organic. Prices paid for this coffee are at the extreme high end of market, social programs are in the works including possibilities for assistance with capacity building and coffee job creation, schools, clean water and medical care.

Asnakech is a client of Fintrac's USAID-funded Agribusiness and Trade Expansion Activity

(ATEA), which improves specialty coffee production and quality in Ethiopia. In 2007 Fintrac helped Asnakech install a coffee processing machine and showed her how to run the eco-friendly pulper. The project also deployed agronomists and consultants to her mill to advise her on how to create specialty coffee at every step of coffee processing -- from looking after trees, to picking, to drying cherries. Fintrac gave Asnakech and producers like her an opportunity to reach new markets and showcase their specialty coffee. She is a perfectionist and go-getter so, in addition to this fine coffee, look for more and better coffee coming from her in the near future.

This dry processed Ethiopian coffee is like a perfect Harrar of yore, one that captured all the chocolate and berry without getting any weird ferment or significant earthiness. Lush, blackberry and blueberry fruit flavors, powerful. Aggressive and complex acidity, with notes of both dry, red wine and lemons. Layers of puckery, citrus fruits, mostly grapefruit. Thick body, chocolate mouthfeel. This particular bean is the best blueberry I've seen in a long time. Simply delicious.

This coffee has high acidity and lots and lots of bright citrus notes. Peaches, wine, and a distinct orange flavor predominates the the cup with floral and molasses notes in the background. Huge creamy body with a cardamon spice finish. Don't miss out on the very limited offering.

## Kenya Nyeri Tegu

Tegu is a coffee washing station, a wet mill, a coffee factory. Well, it's all three. A "factory" is a wet mill where the coop members bring coffee cherry for pulping, fermenting, washing, drying. It's not the factory as we might imagine it. Small washing stations are aligned with a particular "society" which is what they call a cooperative in Kenya. Tegu is part of Tekangu Farmers Cooperative Society (FCS) which combines the names for their 3 factories: Tegu, Karagoto and Ngunguru. I visited them this season and the previous as well, since we have bought many small lots over time from Tekangu. While most of the lots this year grade out as the smaller AB preparation, the quality from Tegu has been remarkable. And of the 2 lots we secured this season, this chop is the truly the best. What I saw at Tegu was excellent sorting of cherry at the mill by each picker, before they submit the coffee to be processed. Over-ripe and immature cherries are culled out. They also have a system where pickers are graded as A or B. "A" pickers are those who have been proven to deliver well-selected and sorted cherry, and they are invited to submit coffee on the "A" day, when a higher price is paid. "B" pickers are still yet-to-be-proven, or have had more immatures and over-matures in their bags. They must come on the lowly "B" day and are paid less. Maybe it seems harsh, but there is no better way I have seen to create an incentive for quality harvesting, rather than mindless strip-picking of the coffee tree. (By the way, this A and B picker system has nothing to do with the AA or AB grade, that refers to screen size of the coffee at the dry mill only. AA, AB and PB all comes from the exact same lot submitted to the dry mill, and is separated only by the coffee size screening equipment).

The dry fragrance is sweet with cherry, raspberry, citrus, and floral elements that one day out of the roaster have a slight fresh hops character. The wet aroma opens up the hoppiness on the young roasts, but winey black currant and sweet citrus fruit are present on the break along with candied melon rind. The cup is a punch bowl full of currant, cranberry, cantaloupe, ripe cherries with a long hard-candy dissolve in the finish. The body is bold and the melon is intense with a muscovado sugar sweetness. Really love this coffee, one of the best Kenyas of the year.

**Tanzania Blackburn Estate**

Blackburn Estate is one of the higher elevation farms in Tanzania, and produces great coffee. But they face chronic water problems due to the local terrain, and higher transportation costs because they are more remote from the dry mills in Moshi. They also face unique vandalism problems due to the fact they are so near beautiful Ngorongoro Conservation Area: water buffalo and elephants. In search for water, elephants uproot water pipes bringing that precious resource to the farm. Water buffalo take a more direct route: they just step on the coffee shrubs, smashing the woody growth, shattering the trunks. Blackburn Estate has been a Black Apron selection from Starbucks, and they have aided greatly in water projects for the farm and the people in local communities.

The dry fragrance has winey fruit, boysenberry, sweet molasses syrup. Wet aromatics are very sweet, fruited, winey. The body is sufficient, not super heavy or texturous. The cup is dominated by juicy berry fruit, which lingers well into the aftertaste. The fruit has this very ripe, winey character. Sweetness, fruit and winey flavors come to the foreground as the cup cools, along with that slight East African wild note. One of Mean Cat Coffee's all-time favorites.