STUMPTOWN
COFFEE ROASTERS

Our Story

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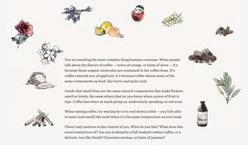
Coffee is about pleasure. It's that moment when your hand is warmed by the mug, you raise it to your nose, inhale deeply and then take a sip.

That sip is the culmination of years of work, three-thousand-mile journeys, and passion. Here is how we make that sip perfect.

Tasting

While you are holding that cup of coffee, close your eyes. Open your mouth slightly. Breathe in deeply through your nose.



You are smelling the most complex thing humans consume. When people say coffee smells like chocolate, citrus, or blueberry, they are right on. It is because these organic molecules are contained in the coffee bean. If a coffee reminds you of apple pie, it's because coffee shares some of the same components as food, like lactic and malic acid.

Inside that retail bean are the same natural compounds that make flowers smell so lovely, the same odors that let you know when a piece of fruit is ripe. Coffee has twice as much going on, molecularly speaking, as red wine.

When tasting coffee, my waning five in a cord down a little – you'll be able to taste (and smell) the most when it's the same temperature as your body.

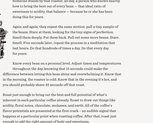
Flavor only matters in the context of you. What do you like? What does this scent remind you of? Are you looking for a full-bodied cowboy coffee, or a delicate, tea-like finish? Chocolate aroma, or hints of jasmine?

Don't worry if you can't describe it precisely, or have a different perception than someone else. Even when you can't put it into words, you'll know what you like.

You experience the full flavors of the coffee bean if and only if nothing has gone wrong during...

Roasting

There is one right way to roast coffee.



Someone stands by that roaster, all day, a person who knows exactly how to bring the heat out of every bean — that ideal ratio of sweetness to acidity, that balance — because he or she has been doing this for years.

Again and again, they repeat the same motions, pull a tiny sample of the beans. Stare at them, looking for the tiny signs of perfection. Smell them deeply. Put them back. Pull out some more beans. Stare. Smell. Repeat. Sometimes, they pull out a few beans and taste them. Just beans. In that hundreds of times a day. Do that every day for years.

Know every bean on a personal level. Adjust times and temperatures throughout the day, knowing that 15 seconds could make the difference between letting this bean shine and overroasting it. Know that in the morning, the roaster is cold. Know that in the evening it's hot, and you should probably shave 45 seconds off that roast.

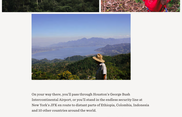
Roast just enough to bring out the best and full potential of what's inside, without burning anything away. Bring out the best in that bean (like acidity, floral notes, chocolate, sweetness, and earth. All of the coffee's flavor potentials are promoted at the first crack – an audible signal that happens at a particular point during roasting coffee. After that, roast just enough to add the right amount of body and sweetness, without degradation.

Roasting different coffees as though they're the same coffee? Not going to work. Roasting for color, not taste? Never. Ever.

Please don't burn those beans. They've been through so much. They've come all the way across the world.

Sourcing

The best coffee grows in the most remote places. There is a thin band that goes around the world near the equator. Within that band, you need mountains, thick old-growth forest and just the right microclimate. Set aside up to four days to get there.



On your way there, you'll pass through Honduras's George Bush International Airport, or you'll stand in the caldera security line at Jorge Chavez INTL in the outskirts of Ethiopia, Colombia, Indonesia and 70 other countries around the world.

You'll also experience 6 vaccines (the malaria pills – which can cause hallucinations and nightmares – are the worst), a passport that fills up with stamps, and a bag that fills up with coffee. Some of the coffee you'll bring out of your case, using the bare of a leaf that has been sloughed off in your house.

The Green Team members, named for the color of coffee beans before they are roasted, don't do it the easy way, which would be buying bulk, mid-quality beans at a trading floor in a capital city. Instead, they go right to the source of the best coffee – that farm or washing station high atop a distant mountain, where the farmer or farmer's cooperative owns the farm or station, factory or mill. They sit down in a home or around a campfire to talk about this year's crop with a producer they have met many times. They get to work.

> In Colombia, if you go to four farms you will get four bowls of sancocho, which is this soup with chicken, yucca, plantains, potatoes, corn, avocado. Basically, it's as many calories as you can cram in a bowl."
>
> – Adam LC, Responsible Coffee Buyer

The Green Team visits every producer as often as possible, sometimes up to three times per year. They constantly count and taste the coffee, and they form long-term, lasting partnerships with the producers. They'll help them improve their farming practices, their ability to produce consistent coffee. Or they'll work a mission or a new way to process coffee, which is the fruit of the coffee tree surrounding the seed or bean.

They routinely pay producers up to four times what they could get for their crop on the commodity market, but in return, they ask for a lot more work – hand picking each cherry at their expense, or implementing a new piece of equipment.

The Green Team also identifies potential future producers – maybe this side of the mountain has just the right climate, but the quality isn't isn't there yet, and it's worth investing in it. Or there's a new farm, and the producer is willing put both effort to get the beans to the level the Green Team looks for. It's a partnership, and there is prestige and pride involved. For a producer, selling to Stumptown means something.

Above all, they want to help farms become sustainable and to set up strong businesses that build up their communities and produce the highest-quality coffee possible year after year.

> No region we buy from is the same as another, and it's important to approach each as a unique relationship so that we can understand the challenges that person or entity faces – whether it's a single producer, association, mill or exporter. With our purchases, we hope to offer stability so that our partners can focus on quality."
>
> – Kevin Sinnott, Director of Sourcing

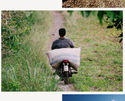
What does Direct Trade mean to Stumptown?

We don't buy in bulk in a trading floor. We buy directly from the people who are making the coffee. It's not a transaction, it's a partnership. If someone is growing the quality of coffee we're interested in, then we will work with them to make it better. We'll help them improve their crop (and high-ball trip can take up to four days), implementing new techniques and equipment, and forming long-term partnerships.

We about for sustainability, and not just in the environmental sense. A sustainable coffee producer is someone who is paid fairly for their incredible work and who can in turn encourage others to follow in their footsteps. A sustainable producer innovates, develops and improves techniques and equipment, and is a leader in their community. Together, the more each side of the partnership gain in, the better the coffee gets.

Producers & Processing

We don't call them farmers, we call them producers, which gives credit to the fact that they are production experts. They are the people who make this coffee pure. They are the ones who are the mindful, 365-per the extra mile for quality.



Producers are the heart of what makes great coffee.

Their skills, expertise and craftsmanship is the difference between mediocre coffee and coffee that is like nothing you've ever tasted before. The coffee will never get any better in quality once it lands in our hands, after all. We rely on the producers for that pristine bean. A good roaster works tirelessly to preserve that coffee's inherent greatness.

The producers grow the coffee trees. They pick the cherry when it is perfectly ripe. They remove the outer fruit, leaving just the bean covered in a thin parchment. They rest the beans, let the beans develop into their full selves.

Everyone on this page does something slightly different — he may tend a small patch of coffee trees on the farm he inherited from his grandmother; she may oversee the cherry soaking in a big tank of water, fermenting at just the right rate.

They live on four continents. They speak at least 30 different languages. Some use traditional methods that are centuries old; some have taken out four-year loans to get that new top-of-the-line piece of equipment that will lead to a greater, cleaner cup.

It's not the easy way. It's not the fast way. It's the right way, and it creates the best coffee possible.

Varieties

Coffee is a tree, and you probably prefer one branch to another, even if you don't know it yet.

There isn't one kind of coffee, there's a coffee family tree. For hundreds of years, humans have been cultivating, hybridizing and perfecting it, and today there are hundreds of types, or varieties.

The variety of coffee tree matters—or at least, it usually does. Just as different types of grapes yield different wines, the variety of the bean can have a profound impact on the finished cup.

There are hundreds of varieties, and we've chosen roughly a dozen that we find truly special. But here are the first ones you should know.

Bourbon

So sweet, so complex and so delicate, this is the pinot noir of coffee. The plants are fragile and don't produce as much cherry as some other varieties, but they're worth the effort. A cup of Bourbon-type variety is lush and classic. It's the coffee of coffee. It charms the snob and the rookie alike. And so, it has nothing to do with the delicious brown adult beverage, though we at Stumptown are big fans of that kind of bourbon, too.

Related: SL28, Tekisik, SL34, Villa Sarchi, Caturra, Colombia, Castillo, Catimor, Marsellesa, Catuaí

Villalobos

This is an offshoot of the Typica family, which is delicate, floral, at times even citrusy. This variety was brought to Indonesia in the late 1600s by Dutch traders. We love it for its nuances and high, fine acidity. Villalobos in particular brings strong flavors of stone fruits like apricots, peaches and plums.

Related: Jember, Pacamara

Ethiopian Heirloom

The beauty of these is in their mystery. They are the wildflower varieties, descended from the natural coffee forests of southwestern Ethiopia. Each village has its own variety, handed down over centuries and shaped by the soil, elevation and weather.

Related: All of them, really but these in particular: Typica, Geisha

Gesha

Think of Gesha as coffee from an alternate dimension. It's like a Szechuan peppercorn, or the Sun Ra Arkestra, complex and otherworldly. It's as far as it could be from diner coffee, a delicate, black-tea body, with a nest of bergamot. Gesha is picky—it will only grow when, where and how it wants, in tiny microclimates. But whether you grow it in Indonesia or the Americas, it is always thoroughly itself

Related: Nothing. It's in its own orbit.

Which, finally, brings us to the very beginnings of coffee...

History

Ten thousand years ago, the *Coffea* trees grew wild and tangly on the mountain slopes of southwestern Ethiopia.

There, you can still find people performing traditional coffee ceremonies many times a day—one woman will prepare it for the circle of her friends and family who stand around her. She roasts it in a pan, grinds it, pours hot water over it, serves it in the predetermined social order.

The Dutch traders, enamored of this tradition, brought cuttings of the plants to Indonesia. French missionaries, who also saw the beauty in this hot, euphoric brew, spread it throughout Africa and across the sea to the Americas.

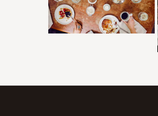
Today, coffee trees are cultivated in every hemisphere on four continents. In 70 countries, you will find those shrubs and their cherry. You'll also find the farmers who tend them, the pickers who select them, the processors who obsessively convert fruit to bean. You'll find the roasters who delicately transform them, and you'll find the coffee drinkers.

You'll find the earliest riser in the backpacking crew that stokes the fire and sets the water on to boil. You'll find the barista who pulls the first shot of the morning for the go-getter. You'll find the group of 70-year-old men in the diner at 6 a.m., spending hours discussing the issues of the day over their bottomless cups.

> Drinking coffee is a pleasure. Coffee drinking is fun, and it feels good, and every once in awhile I remember that we're actually cultivating pleasure. Why do you put anything in your mouth? Because it's delicious."
>
> —Jim Kelso, Quality Assurance, Stumptown Coffee Roasters

Everything that came before—the shrubs, the farmer, the journey across the sea, the hybrids and the mutations—is for this moment. Because the only thing required for the smallest, quietest and most personal of coffee ceremonies are some good beans and a way to brew.

You'll hold that mug possessively. You'll inhale deeply. And then you drink.



Good Luck

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