



THE BEAN ROUTINE

ROASTER TRAVELS...CUP OF EXCELLENCE, NICARAGUA 2011

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NOTES FROM THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY CUP OF EXCELLENCE IN NICARAGUA

This was a very big year for the Cup of Excellence in Nicaragua. It was the 10th anniversary of this competition taking place, and it was where the CoE all began. With its (the CoE) beginnings being talked about over dinner at a restaurant in Matagalpa, it was fitting this year's competition would take place there. With the importance of this event, there was a lot of media coverage, publicity, and events....All in the name of EXEMPLARY COFFEE!!! There were 17 people on the International Jury with 10 countries being represented: USA, Canada, Lithuania, Austria, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Japan, Korea, and Nicaragua. We all arrived in Matagalpa on Sunday. That evening there was a large welcoming ceremony and opening presentations for the week-long competition to come.

The Competition and the Coffees

There were 370 coffees submitted to the National Jury. The Nat'l Jury narrowed it down to 60 coffees. These 60 coffees were complex with wide ranges of aromas and flavors: brown sugar, caramel apples, floral bergamot, and sweet cedar spice to comment on a few aromas. The flavors were also vast. Fruit salads of mangos and peaches, sweet strawberries to lemongrass, with velvety, and sometimes creamy mouthfeels present. And finishes ranging from clove spice and molasses to delicate florals of tea rose and vanilla. As you can tell, I fancied these coffees. Some of the diversities amongst the coffees that were noted were not only due to varietals or processing, but

also the diverseness present within the four main growing regions of Nicaragua.



The schedule started on Monday with three sessions of calibration cuppings, each followed by a discussion. These sessions are great because it helps the judges come together on the individual perimeters of what each score means. Tuesday was the first day of competition. We had three sessions of 10 coffees; 30 coffees total were evaluated. By the end of the day, one coffee was disqualified by a phenolic defect. Wednesday, the second day of competition, was almost an exact replica of the day before.....with yes, a second coffee disqualified by a phenolic defect.

On Thursday's cupping, we cupped all of the coffees from the first six sessions that scored an 84 or above. Eighty-four is the magic score that can pass a coffee into CoE standards. With the 60 coffees we started with, 29 coffees



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would make it into this round. We then had another three sessions of cuppings for these coffees. Twenty-seven of these coffees ended up scoring an 84 or above again, so these are the ones we will see up for auction. On Friday we had one cupping session to rank the top ten. Out of the top ten ranked there was only one presidential award given (a score of 90 and above), and that went to the #1 coffee from the farm La Guadalupana (Napoleon and Miguel) with a score of 91.13 from Dipilto- Nueva Segovia region. A majority of the winners came out of this region...must be something in that soil.



The “Meet the Producers” event is the beginning of the end of the competition week. This is where the cuppers have the opportunity to meet some of the farmers and ask any questions that they may have relative to the farmer’s coffee. It makes the Award Ceremony that much more precious when you have had the chance to connect with these folks face to face moments before.

The Tours

Our first tour was a trip to “Atlantic.” Atlantic functions as a large dry mill and a coffee exporter, as well as a coffee cultivation laboratory. The tour focused mainly on in vitro fertilization of coffee--for you scientists, “embryogenesis” or, quite plainly, coffee clones. They first started the process by taking a small coffee leaf sample (using traditional Ethiopian varieties) and placing it on a petri dish.



After cell construction, isolation, and many more sterile scientific steps, a coffee clone is the end product. This botanical scientific discovery has shown positive characteristics such as more plant vigor, more coffee production, and some disease resistance. There are presently quite a few farmers growing these hybrids--El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras were a few countries noted.



After getting all of this information, seeing clones in the making and greenhouses full of cloned coffee, we then went back to their cupping lab and cupped them. We cupped the original Ethiopian coffees in which the clones came from, and then we cupped the clones. Wow! The coffees were about as different as different can get from one another. It was a very interesting experience. If I may put a personal plug in here...I don’t know how I feel about it all. It’s hard for farmers to pass up the possibility of producing coffee in one year (as opposed to 3-4 years)



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and also a possible increase of production by 20-40%, but there are a lot of unknowns out there on this subject.



We also had a tour to “SelvaNegra” (Black Forest). This place is amazing. The SelvaNegra farm and way of life has been five generations in the making and is facilitated by Eddy and Mausi Kuhl. This sustainable farm and community comprises 1500 acres in the mountains. One-third of the farm is coffee, one-third is hiking trails through the nature reserve, and one-third is vegetables, fruit, and cacao. On



the property surrounding the main lodge and restaurant are lagoons, cabana rentals, and a chapel up in the woods. You can even hear howler monkeys. Eddy and Mausi utilize most everything they can in order to be sustainable. They have both hydro and solar power on the property along

with bio-digesters to supply gas energy. Also in their future works is wind energy. The restaurant menu features everything in season for fruits and vegetables along with chocolate cake desserts highlighting their cacao with layers of canned fruit preserves. They have their own livestock for meat, eggs, and dairy...and not only chicken eggs but quail eggs too. They also make their own gourmet cheeses and cured meats that are sold in a few market places. There is a school on the property for the kids in the community, and the farm is very supportive and has scholarship programs for continuing education. In closing on SelvaNegra, I would love to try their coffee. All of the coffee they produce is sold to Allegro Coffee Roasters (Co.) and to their daughter who lives in Florida and has a small roastery. Occasionally some of their coffee may come available to wider audiences. I hope we catch that wave if it floats by.



And last but hardly least, I had the opportunity to visit the Limoncillo Farm and the Mierisch’s beneficio (mill). Erwin Mierisch, his wife Brenda and sister Elianna were our tour guides for the day. This is one of their four family farms and is considered the experimental farm. This farm was another slice of heaven that exists on earth. It seemed so harmonious with all of the different shade trees, fruit trees, waterfalls, and other plant life. And the Limoncillo’s Pacamara Pulped Natural coffee that we were able to have this past year tasted even that much better to me.

One of the experiments on the farm included grafting of Robusta’s vigorous and large root system to Arabica



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shoots. We were also able to see the hybrid plants from “Atlantic” in the ground and full of coffee at one year old. Erwin had an interesting finding on this farm in the past year. In amongst



his crop of red pacamaras, he discovered yellow cherries. This was a natural genetic mutation that happened, and it produced a yellow pacamara varietal. We had the opportunity to cup this coffee and it was excellent. He is now isolating this crop and will be processing it separately. The management of the farm seemed meticulous, as was noted while driving through and being able to see the successive pruning that happens every third year. At their beneficio, they are also experimenting with processing methods. They are producing fully washed coffees, pulped natural, and natural coffees.

In closing, I can't forget to mention the Café that was two blocks from our hotel--“Café Barista Due – Pasion Por El Café” was excellent. It is owned and ran by the 3rd place World Barista Champ from 2008. The finesse, technique, and consistency shown by the owner and all of his employees was truly a treat to watch. Almost every afternoon we would stop there and receive amazing espresso and see some latte art. I have lots of pictures and videos to share from this and all of the days' experiences.

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Green Bean Buyer & Roaster

