

P A N A M A

HACIENDA LA ESMERALDA



★ GEISHA JARAMILLO ESPECIAL, AUCTION LOT #8 ★

COFFEE

LOCATION JARIMILLO
VARIETAL GEISHA
ALTITUDE 1650 M
HARVEST FEB 15 - 20TH

GEOFF'S NOTES

You've heard the stories and whispers, seen the mile high prices and awards. So what is the secret? Why has this Esmeralda Especial managed to enchant the coffee world and win competitions with one arm tied behind its back?

It all starts with the varietal. Like wine grapes, coffee cherries come in a large number of genetically distinct botanic varieties. There are the traditional varieties of Arabica, many of which you are probably familiar with: Bourbon, Typica, Caturra, Catuai, Mondo Novo, SL-28, Kent and Pacas are just a few examples of coffee tree types that are in widespread commercial production throughout Latin America and East Africa. But there are certainly hundreds and possibly many thousands of wild varieties out there that have not ever been fully explored or researched.

So let's take a trip back to where it all started. Coffee, as you know, was born in southwestern Ethiopia near the Great Rift Valley. It is the only place on earth that coffee is known to be native, meaning that every coffee tree in the world is a descendent of those from Ethiopia. Over many thousands of years coffee grew wild there (and still does in many parts, especially the Kaffa forest, which should be considered a unique and highly valuable reserve of natural varieties that do not exist anywhere else!). A few varieties were taken and cultivated overseas in places like Indonesia and the Caribbean, and eventually the world was populated with coffees. But think about it for a moment...most of what we drink comes from a very limited gene pool. Most can be traced back to a handful of specific varieties that made the journey out of Ethiopia.

Fast-forward many centuries into the early 1900's, when European researchers began in earnest to catalogue varieties and conduct experiments to choose particularly good performing trees to cultivate. Usually trees were chosen based on certain physical traits—resistance to disease or sun, tolerance for drought or nutrient deficiency, high productivity—not so much on the basis of taste as we understand it today. Choosing a tree

like the Geisha would have seemed unlikely, given that it is not especially productive and tends to be a bit fragile. But for some reason an unknown person decided to take this particular variety to Kenya in 1931.

Then in 1936 it was planted in Tanzania. Again, no one is quite sure why. In 1953 it was brought to Costa Rica as part of a program to build up a large stock of varieties for research and experimentation. It was part of an effort by CATIE (an agricultural research institution that has one of the coffee world's largest and most diverse collections of identified coffee varieties) to try to develop new and better hybrids.

In the 1960's it was brought to Panama. But it was soon forgotten, as it was much lower-yielding than other available varieties and farmers did not see any advantage to planting Geisha when they could get much better production out of Caturra or other hybrids.

No one talked about or thought about Geisha until 2004, when Daniel Peterson of Hacienda La Esmeralda decided to investigate these odd-looking, tall and spindly trees that were growing on his family's farm. He harvested and processed them separately from everything else, and then on a whim (and with much reservation) entered them into the 2004 Best of Panama competition. To his astonishment, it captivated the jury to such a degree that many were awarding perfect 100-point scores in the competition, an extreme rarity among the cupping crowd. Many thought it was a trick, that someone had slipped an Ethiopian coffee on the table as a surprise. The coffee was so floral, so seductively sweet and aromatic, so honey-drenched and alive with tropical fruit notes that we all had a hard time believing it was really a Panamanian coffee—it defied everything we had come to expect.

The rest is history—the coffee is a living legend already, and has caused the entire Specialty industry to re-examine what we know about varieties. The Geisha phenomenon (the coffee is thought to have originated in

CHARACTERISTICS

FLAVOR JASMINE, HONEYSUCKLE, TANGERINE
ACIDITY CLEAN, CRISP
FINISH CLEAN, WHITE GRAPE

the far west of Ethiopia near a town called Gecha or Gesha) is going to influence the way we think about Specialty coffee in the future. And it highlights the importance of the collaboration between man and nature. Nature does what man cannot—create a kind of beauty so profound in its conception that we can only marvel at it, never really understand it. But with coffee, human energy is needed to preserve that intrinsic beauty. I'm sure there are many coffees in Ethiopia we've yet to encounter that will someday blow the Esmeralda out of the water and set new standards for greatness. Yet for all the varietal advantage Ethiopia has over the rest of the world, coffees there are still limited by flawed infrastructure. For now, Esmeralda is King—coffee seeds infused with Ethiopian majesty harvested and cared for with the technical precision and technological resources of well-funded Panamanian artisan farmers.

East meets West, to the collective delight of thousands of coffee fanatics!

TASTING NOTES

Over the past few years, the overwhelming popularity of the “Geisha” varietal has nearly eclipsed the sublime quality of the coffee itself. Fragrant floral notes greet the nose before the first sip, which yields remarkable clarity of flavor and intricacy of mouthfeel. Truly one of the most unique and inspiring coffees we've ever tasted, this year's crop from Hacienda la Esmeralda is a deluge of sweet ripe tangerine and melon flavors, complimented by an unsubtle sweetness likened to that of honeysuckle, jasmine, and the distinct hint of the coffee flower itself. This unmistakable coffee is a full sensory experience worth savoring from aromatic inception to crystalline finish and is easily recognizable as unequivocally exceptional.