

DIRECT TRADE

Doyo, Ethiopia



INTELLIGENTSIA COFFEE

Generous red fruit notes ranging from pomegranate to fresh raspberry and maraschino cherry accompany a buttery nougat-like mouthfeel and a lemon curd acidity. Floral aromatics float in and out with hints of lavender and violet while the finish is soft and clean.

REGION	Mana, Jimma
VARIETAL	Indigenous
ELEVATION	1650 - 2000 masl
HARVEST	December - February
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FLAVOR	Red fruits, floral, nougat
ACIDITY	Lemon curd, mandarin
MOUTHFEEL	Buttery
FINISH	Clean, honey

GEOFF WATT'S NOTES:

Talking about Ethiopia and coffee is a difficult thing, much in the same way that it is very hard to communicate the value and impact of a masterful song or painting using only words. That's just the way it is—we don't have a language that is capable of capturing the emotional intensity and profound soulfulness of great art.

To describe why Ethiopia is so intriguing and why its coffees are so unbelievably full of life is a job best left to poets. But we'll stumble onwards anyhow. For starters, remember that Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee. It is the one place on earth that where native Arabica coffee varieties grow wild, and it is home to more genetic diversity in coffee than the rest of the producing countries combined by a huge margin. Ethiopia boasts the most ancient and the most compelling traditions for coffee consumption that the world has seen. Coffee permeates the cultural fabric of Ethiopian life, and is celebrated daily in a way that would make Juan Valdez give up his poncho and his mule and pursue a life of meditation and monastic serenity.

Take the coffee ceremony, for example. It is extremely common for people to buy green coffees in the markets then take them home and prepare them in the living room using a pan to roast over coals, a mortar and pestle to grind, and a clay pot to boil and brew. The coffee ceremony is at once a social tradition, a celebration of the virtuous properties of coffee, and an opportunity for contemplation and reflection. Coffee is served over a period of time in three individual rounds—the Abol, Tona, and Baraka, each of which has its specific significance. Life without coffee is almost unimaginable—most people drink coffee in the morning, the afternoon, the evening, and sometimes late into the night. Ethiopia is one of only two producing countries that drink more than half of what they grow!





Coffee (“buna” in Amharic) accounts for nearly two-thirds of foreign export earnings, and employs about 10% of the population. It is in many ways the life’s blood of the entire country.

In the past most of our attention has been focused on coffees grown in the Southern part of the country in regions like Sidama and Yirgacheffe due to the exceptional floral qualities, profound sweetness, and delicate aromatics that can be found there. But recently a project being operated by TechnoServe in the Western part of the country—places like Kaffa, Illubabor and Welega—has given us reason to turn some attention to some of Ethiopia’s oldest and most underrated coffee areas. Up until recently most of the coffees produced there were not handled especially well post-harvest and the vast majority of the coffees were treated as naturals, without any washing process. They typically sold at a discount as compared with coffees from other regions, leaving producers there at a severe economic disadvantage further compounded by the fact that many of the individual producers were not organized and would often end up selling their coffees to local collectors for low prices. The TNS projects have set out to organize producers into groups and provide them with the training and infrastructure to increase the quality of their coffees and help them earn a premium in the marketplace. Now in it’s second year, we’ve already begun to see some excellent results and have every expectation that these once unheralded coffees will begin to compete on a more even playing field with coffees from areas in the South and East.

The Doyo cooperative and washing station is located near to the city of Jimma and was one of the pioneer stations in the area. The group is part of the Oromia Union, one of nearly 200 groups that represent close to a quarter of a million farmers. One of the interesting innovations they’ve implemented is the use of vetiver grass (*Chrysopogon zizanioides*) in sediment pools to control the post-fermentation water so that it does not lead to pollution in the surrounding areas. The group itself is comprised of roughly 430 active farmers and over a thousand members who contribute on a semi-regular basis. The average farm size of planted coffee is less than half a hectare—very typical for Ethiopia but miniscule as compared with just about any other country.

