

ETHIOPIA ROCKO MOUNTAIN RESERVE

AT A GLANCE...

ALTITUDE – 1950 - 2150 masl

LOCATION – Haricha Woreda, Gedeo zone, Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS)

PREPARATION – Natural

VARIETY – Heirloom

HARVEST – November to February

SHIPMENT – April onwards



It is widely believed that coffee originates from Ethiopia and is therefore indigenous to the country, though there are other schools of thought that suggest it may have all started in Sudan. Generally speaking though, it is the town of Kaffa, from which coffee derives its name, that is considered the rightful birthplace of this wonderful commodity and, to this day, coffee grows wild in the area.

Research suggests that coffee was originally used as a food – ground still raw and blended with animal fats. Kaldi is of course the famous name of our industry, for legend has it that it was this goatherd who discovered coffee. He copied his goats by eating the bright red cherries that made them so lively and in doing so joined in with their wild dancing. A preacher observing such frivolities hurled Kaldi's cherries onto a fire declaring them the devil's work - until the air was filled with the delightful aromas of the roasting beans, upon which he relented, declaring such a fragrance to be surely the work of God!

Ethiopia produces a wide range of coffee with each region's beans having very distinctive characteristics making some of these the best and most sought after in the world. Key producing regions include Harar, Sidamo, Yirgacheffe (in Sidamo), Limu, Djimmah, Lekempti and Bebeke. Ethiopia is the largest coffee producer in Africa and in the Arabica league is third in the world with a production of between 4 and 5 million bags.

HEIRLOOM: These varieties most resemble the Typica variety though there is no exact way of tracing their development. There are now over 1000 different heirloom varieties growing in the Wild Forests of Ethiopia and the first steps to separating them into lots are underway. These varieties are responsible for some of the most coveted cup profiles in the world – florals, citrus, cocoa, tea, wild berries...



THE ECX

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Coffee in Ethiopia has been traded on the Ethiopia Commodity Exchange since 2008. The ECX was established to create a new market place which served the needs of all of the actors involved in the coffee supply chain, from the farmers to the final consumer. Previously, only a third of all the agricultural products produced in Ethiopia reached the market due to the high costs and risks involved with trading. There was no assurance of product quality or quantity which meant buyers would only trade with suppliers they knew and trusted. This resulted in many of Ethiopia's agricultural producers becoming isolated from the market, forcing them to sell their produce to the nearest buyer, and leaving them unable to negotiate on price or improve their market position.

With the introduction of the ECX, coffee exports in Ethiopia have become centralised enabling more smallholder producers to have access to the global market. Ninety per cent of all the coffee produced in Ethiopia now moves through the ECX where it is cupped and graded according to flavour profile and quality. Since its inception in 2008, the ECX claims to have introduced:

- Market integrity - by guaranteeing the product grade and quantity and operating a system of daily clearing and settling of contracts.
- Market efficiency - by operating a trading system where buyers and sellers can coordinate in a seamless way on the basis of standardized contracts.
- Market transparency - by disseminating market information in real time to all market players.
- Risk management - by offering contracts for future delivery, providing sellers and buyers a way to hedge against price risk.

This system seems to have been successful in giving more smallholders access to the market and can result in some really consistent stand out lots with incredible flavour profiles. The downside for the speciality buyer is the inability to access information about the precise origins of the coffee. Coffee moving through the ECX is marked generically for export based on the grade and quality, it is impossible to know which smallholders have contributed towards the lot you are buying.

YIRGACHEFFE

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Yirgacheffe is both a town and grade of coffee in Ethiopia. The town itself is located in the Gedeo zone in the Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) in Southern Ethiopia. More than any other country, Ethiopia has a broad genetic diversity among its coffee varieties, with each type having distinctive taste, shape and colour. As a result, each region in the country can offer a different flavour profile, forming the grading system for Ethiopian coffees e.g. Sidamo, Harrar, Limu, Djimmah etc. It is widely argued that a Yirgacheffe grade coffee can offer one of the most distinctive flavour profiles in the world with pungent floral aroma and intense citrus flavour.



Processing in Yirgacheffe can take the form of both washed and natural, with most of the coffee growing at over 2000 metres above sea level. Much of the coffee grown in Ethiopia is done so using traditional methods, under shade trees alongside other crops and without the use of chemicals. Coffee from Yirgacheffe is often referred to as 'garden coffee' as it is grown on very small plots, often in the back yard of small dwellings.

Working in partnership with Addis Exporter, a business with more than 100 years' experience in exporting high quality coffee from Ethiopia, we have been able to select an incredible natural processed coffee from smallholders based around the Rocko Mountain in the Haricha Woreda, Yirgacheffe. These smallholder farmers have hand-picked their cherries and sold them to a local trader who oversees the processing and sorting before selling the beans to the ECX who grade the beans according to SCAA standards. Addis Exporter then purchase the top quality lots from the ECX and select the best for their 'Rocko Mountain Reserve'.

GIRLS GOTTA RUN FOUNDATION

This year, we have decided to include a donation to the 'Girls Gotta Run Foundation' in the price paid for our Rocko Mountain Reserve. This is a non-profit organisation that empowers girls in Ethiopia through running and education. The UN Population Fund identified that early marriage is the most prevalent factor in cutting short the education of girls across all regions in Ethiopia.



Although the government has outlawed marriage before the age of 18, 24% of girls are still taken out of school and married by the age of just 15. While most girls supported by GGRF do not become professional athletes, some do and the training given allows the girls to stay in school and avoid early marriage and pregnancy. In turn, this can enhance their personal economic opportunities and gives them a safe space to develop their sense of community, leaving them better equipped to face the challenges posed to them during their most vulnerable years.

GGRF provides 'Athletic Scholarships' for girls entering secondary school, these include the following:

- Full scholarship to attend secondary school including healthcare for the student and her mother, daily meals, uniform, books, writing materials, tutoring, access to school clubs and library, showers and space to wash clothes on a weekend.
- Completion of the GGRF/CCL Life Skills Curriculum, developed to create safe spaces for girls and provide experiential learning modules on family planning, financial literacy, HIV/AIDS awareness, nutrition, healthy relationships, leadership and creative expression.
- Running clothes, shoes and healthy snacks for the year.
- Entrance and transportation to Ethiopian races throughout the year.
- Oversight of a coach and academic mentor.

So far since 2006, 50 girls have been supported by GGRF and are challenging some of the social and cultural norms in Ethiopia by continuing their education at university. We are so pleased to be able to contribute towards this fantastic organisation this year, and if you would like any further information about the GGRF, please visit their website: <http://www.girlsgottarun.org/>


