

THE ART AND FUN OF HOME ROASTING

If I just had a coffee bean for every time someone asked me what is the "PERFECT BEAN" . The number of factors required to obtain a consistent bean from one source could fill a book. Coffee is an agricultural product that changes with weather, preparation, shipping, storage and a whole host of other factors. In order to regularly be able to produce a certain "CUP" you need to blend both coffees and roasts. This is where the fun really begins. Now you are not just taking the beans someone else has chosen and roasting them to your preferred roast profile, you are making blends that are your very own based on your unique coffee preferences.

We in the Specialty Coffee business look for 4 main things when cupping coffee. Number one, DEFECTS. This is simply flavors that have gotten into the beans that shouldn't be, re: ferment, musty, chemically and many other flavors that could have been picked up along the way to your cup. The three that concern your blending are: AROMA, BODY and ACIDITY the combinations of which give us the CUP. All of these are desired characteristics in a great cup of coffee and there are many coffees from single origin that have a very nice balance of all three. When you desire to build a "better cup" that is when you look for the characteristics you desire and fill your cup with them by blending.

Here is a great starting point: Costa Rica has, in my opinion, the most perfectly balanced coffee in the world with an aroma which is strong and delightful. Sumatra which also has very nice aroma, is known for its very heavy body and brings interesting flavors to your cup which are developed by the method of preparation at source. The most acidic coffees come from Ethiopia and add zip to your cup. I compare Ethiopians (I like the Yirgacheffe) to adding tobasco to chicken soup it gives just that little extra to brighten up the cup.

Always roast these coffees separately and change the proportions to suit your desired "cup". Here is where I would start if you like dark roasted coffee. 40% French roasted Costa Rican (very hard bean, takes dark roast well), 40% Vienna/Full City roast Sumatra and 20% Cinnamon/City roast Ethiopian.

Buy a set of pyrex custard bowls to do your testing. After you have roasted, blended and ground the beans, put a heaping Tablespoon into a custard bowl, add 6 fl oz boiling water and investigate. Smell the aroma then with a spoon break the crust of coffee grounds floating on top. Catch the burst of aroma that explodes out of the cup when you break the crust. Strain the grounds out and taste by slurping off a spoon in order to spread the coffee across your palate (you may want to then spit it out, we do when cupping). You are looking for body and acidity making up the balance you desire for your personal cup. Keep notes as to what you find and how you grade each concoction. Do this often and you will learn tons about what makes up this nectar of the gods and easily be able to find the secret coffee that is your "perfect cup".

Jim Cameron

Thirty year veteran in the Specialty Coffee Industry

P.S. Please be sure to email us your favorite blend so we can share them with our other home roasting enthusiasts. info@u-roast-em.com