

GLOBAL GOURMET

"[Coffee] is a social binder, a warmer of tongues, a soberer of minds, a stimulant of wit, a foiler of sleep if you want it so. From roadside mugs to the classic demitasse, it is the perfect democrat."

-THE NEW YORK TIMES, 1949



JAVA GOES GLOBAL

EXPLORE SOME OF THE WORLD'S FINEST COFFEE REGIONS AND THEIR SINGULAR BLENDS.

BY BRET LOVE

There's something about coffee that seems somehow mystical, even magical. The process of grinding the fresh beans, brewing the pot and sharing an aromatic cup brings with it an air of the ancient—a communal ritual that dates back more than 500 years and spans our entire planet.

Coffee's roots can be traced to northeastern Ethiopia, and there's archaeological evidence in the Sufi shrines of Yemen suggesting that it was consumed regularly as early as the 15th century. From its original cultivation in southern Arabia, the sacred bean began to spread across the Muslim world into Europe, India, Indonesia and, eventually, the Americas. Now, more than 2.25 billion cups are consumed every day, with beans harvested from the cherries of trees cultivated in more than 70 different countries.

With a coffee shop on every corner, coffee connoisseurs seem eager to find exotic varieties to make their daily java fix more than an average cup of joe. Here, we highlight some of the world's most noteworthy gourmet coffee-producing locales and their special blends.

COURTESY OF THE COFFEE COLLECTIVE



Left to right: Seedling of SL-28; cupping at Central Kenya Coffee Mill; drying tables at Karatu Coffee Mill in Kenya

Africa

As the birthplace of coffee, it's no surprise that virtually every central African nation grows it. But it's Kenya that has emerged as a perennial favorite among connoisseurs, in part because of its unique combination of climate, soil and elevation. According to expert Jeff Taylor, co-founder of PT's Coffee Roasting Company, Roast magazine's 2009 Roaster of the Year, what really separates Kenyan coffee is the variety of trees. "Farms in Kenya use a mix of varieties called SL-28 and SL-54, which have proven year after year to produce exceptional coffee," Taylor says. "They were originally developed by Scott Laboratories decades ago, with the intent of being disease-resistant, but they also happened to be exceptional in flavor." Compared to some of the world's other gourmet coffees, Kenyan varieties are a bargain, averaging less than US\$30 a pound.



Europe

There's not a single country in Europe known for growing coffee. But brewing it? Italy, home of the espresso, has made the process an art. Espresso involves water heated to 190 – 200 degrees Fahrenheit, then passed through 8 grams of coffee at 130 pounds per square inch for 25 - 30 seconds. The first espresso maker patent was issued to Angelo Moriondo in 1884, but it was Hungarian-born Italian resident Francesco Illy who invented the first automatic coffee machine that substituted compressed air for steam in 1935. He also devised the packaging system in which coffee cans were filled with inert gases rather than pressurized air, which allowed the Trieste-based Illy brand to be sold all over Italy. "His inventions made it possible to enjoy consistently pleasant-tasting espresso, which was a random event until then," says Illy's master barista, Giorgio Milos. "Out of that grew more innovation throughout [Italy], a deep passion for perfecting coffee and the emergence of baristas as skilled professionals. That led to an expectation of quality, and a coffee culture that emerged from that, with coffee part of everyone's lives throughout the day."



Como, Italy



DANIEL PECKHAM

Killarney, Ireland



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Civet



Bali, Indonesia



Kona coffee

Asia

Arguably the trendiest gourmet coffee in the world originates in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. There, small, forest-dwelling creatures called Asian palm civets feed on the ripest, sweetest coffee cherries. The beans then move through the civet's digestive tract after fermenting in the stomach, where enzymes break down the proteins that give coffee its bitter taste. Once it passes, farmers collect the beans from the droppings, which are then washed, sun-dried, roasted and sold as kopi luwak (or wild civet coffee). According to Alanna Price of Doi Chaang Coffee Company, whose products are sold by Dean & DeLuca, the eliminated civet beans have less protein and bacteria, and different compounds than other gourmet coffee beans. "The aroma and complexity of the beans produce a coffee that is syrupy, with hints of chocolate and has an incredibly smooth taste." It's also incredibly rare, which explains why prices average at US\$60 for about 1.7 ounces.

Caribbean

With the Dominican Republic being the only country in the area ranking among the top 25 coffee-producing nations in the world, the Caribbean can't compete with Africa, Asia or Latin America in terms of quantity. But, for some java aficionados, the quality of Caribbean coffee is second to none. Arguably the most sought after is Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee, which is grown in one of the highest mountain ranges in the Caribbean. There, the mixture of cool air, high rainfall, rich soil and excellent drainage creates the perfect climate, leading to a coffee renowned for its mild, almost sweet flavor. Blue Mountain Coffee is highly regulated by Jamaica's Coffee Industry Board, which monitors its cultivation, quality and strict geographical boundaries. A pound of Jamaica's finest will set you back around US\$55, but more than 80% of the island nation's 4.6 million pound annual output is sold to Japan.

North America

Grown only in the Kona districts of Hawaii's Big Island on the slopes of Hualalai and Mauna Kea, 100 percent Kona coffee is arguably among the world's rarest and most treasured varieties. Its origins can be traced back to the 1820s, when Brazilian tree cuttings were first planted in the rich volcanic soil. When combined with sunny mornings and regular afternoon showers, the result is a delicately flavored brew unlike any other. Asked about the product's US\$50 per pound price tag, Brazen Hazen Coffee Estate farm manager Brian Axelrod says, "Kona coffee commands a higher price point primarily due to its uniqueness of cup, and also for its limited availability. Kona coffee is hand picked upon ripening. Many large operations in other countries mechanically pick, so their coffees include some overripe and some immature beans." It's hard to argue with the results, the perfection of which Axelrod credits to sound farming technique and the blessings of Mother Nature.

Central/South America

Nearly every country in Latin America exports coffee, with Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Peru and Honduras all ranking among the top 10 nations in terms of annual production. But Panama is rapidly emerging as one of the world's hottest gourmet coffee markets. Jeff Taylor of PT's Coffee Roasting Company says credit for the region's recent success can be attributed to the 2004 discovery of a variety called Geisha, which is indigenous to Ethiopia. "Hacienda La Esmeralda discovered Geisha on their farm and separated it from the rest of their crop. The result was very unique, very floral, so they decided to enter it into the Best of Panama Coffee Competition. Now it sells for US\$60 per pound green, which means it's more than US\$120 per pound roasted."

With each region producing its own singular coffee, no matter where your travels take you, there's a great gourmet coffee just waiting to be discovered.

Clockwise from top: Coffee plantation in Batatais, São Paulo, Brazil; coffee production in Colombia; coffee plantation in Guatemala; coffee flowers in Honduras



COURTESY OF THE COFFEE COLLECTIVE



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Where to Stay



Clockwise from above left: Keekorok Lodge; Hotel Mulia Senayan; Fishing Lodge Cap Cana, A Salamander® Resort; Mauna Kea Beach Hotel; Savoia Excelsior Palace; Trump Ocean Club® International Hotel & Tower Panama

AFRICA

The Masai Mara National Reserve in Kenya is revered as one of the world's finest ecotourism havens, and **Keekorok Lodge** sits in the center of it all. When guests aren't out on game drives, bird-watching walks or hot air balloon rides, they can savor spectacular savannah views with dinner outdoors on the Elephant Deck, followed by a heavenly cup of Kenyan coffee.

ASIA

Tucked inside **Hotel Mulia Senayan** in Jakarta, The Café offers world-class coffee, including four varieties of the kopi luwak: Ranau, Medan, Aceh and Flores. With a lovely view of a cascading fountain and a warm atmosphere, it is one of the most sought-after spots in the city. Inspired by the earth's elements (fire, water, wood), the café and gastronomic restaurant showcases an oasis of style and flavorful food that is the perfect complement to the café dining experience.

CARIBBEAN

Opened in the fall of 2011, **Fishing Lodge Cap Cana, A Salamander® Resort** in the Dominican Republic rests amid the crystal clear waters and bright blue skies of the Caribbean, just a short drive from Punta Cana Int'l Airport. The Mediterranean-style lodge features five restaurants, where guests can find homegrown Dominican coffee.

CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICA

Opened in 2011, **Trump Ocean Club® International Hotel & Tower Panama** is a 70-story mixed-use development designed to look like a ship's sail. Donald Trump's first Central American real estate investment, the Panama City waterfront property features three restaurants, all of which serve fresh, locally grown Panamanian coffee.

EUROPE

Overlooking Italy's picturesque Gulf of Trieste, **Savoia Excelsior Palace** is a turn-of-the-century hotel (built in 1912) that's been

completely renovated. Located near historic coffee houses such as the Caffè Tommaseo and San Marco, the hotel is also close to the Illy's Università del caffè of Trieste, which was created to promote the culture of quality coffee worldwide.

NORTH AMERICA

Located on the Big Island of Hawaii's sunny Kohala Coast, **Mauna Kea Beach Hotel** was founded by Laurance S. Rockefeller in 1965. Four decades later the luxury beach resort received a US\$150 million upgrade. From the legendary Mauna Kea Golf Course to oceanside treatments at the Mauna Kea Spa, it's a perfect place for a dream tropical getaway. And the Brazen Hazen Kona coffee plantation is less than an hour away. **PL**

For further information and reservations, visit PreferredHotelGroup.com

