

Tiny Joy

a home coffee roasting newsletter

August - Sept 2008

Fair Trade Is, Fair Trade Isn't by Maria

In my conversations with business-type folks (not something that happens often), I start to think that we have the whole thing backwards. Other coffee businesses figure out what they can charge people for their products – what the going competitive price is for, say, a cup of coffee – and then calculate backwards to what they will pay for their green coffee once they factor in rent, wages, equipment, blah-blah-blah. They call up a coffee broker and say “I need a Colombian coffee and I will not pay more than \$1.20 a pound.” Or “I’ll pay the C price + \$.20.” That way they know that they will cover their costs.

Sweet Maria’s from the beginning has gone about things the other way round - we pick the coffees we like without looking at the price tag – and figure out how to sell them later. We think we ought to pay more for quality coffee – and our customers will understand that all coffees are not created equal. It is not that the other way is wrong; it is just not how we run our business. This ends up meaning that pay well over the market average price for coffee across the board.

In recent years, Fair Trade (FT) has caught on as a way to try to deliver a better price to the producers of basic commodities, and in many ways it is a good thing. It means that co-ops are paid more for their coffee. What it means to be a Fair Trade reseller on a practical level is that you pay the broker a premium price, and also pay \$.10 per pound to Trans Fair USA- the agency that administrates Fair Trade as a branding strategy – on a quarterly basis. So there is the expense that goes to support and promote Fair Trade and a fair amount of paperwork. (Maybe I am sensitive on this point – I do all the paperwork!)

Fair Trade as it is currently defined is a good thing - but it is not perfect. Fair Trade as a model is based on co-ops of farmers and this model seems to have caught on the most in Central and South America, though there are huge successful co-ops in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and other

nations. So it is based not on the quality of the commodity produced – just how it is produced.

There are some issues with this. First, some countries have different systems of pooling and processing and exporting coffee that mean it is not farm specific – farmers are not organized as co-ops for various reasons, and the way the coffee is handled means that it can not be segregated – so it is not traceable to specific farm or set of farms. Efforts to change this are in the works, as farm and region specific coffee origins can traction, but coffee production has a long legacy and the situation is different in nearly every country. Coffee from small farms or estates that are individually owned cannot qualify as Fair Trade - even if they have a great reputation for other social and environmental programs.

Also - coffee co-ops are often not what consumers might think. There are many excellent co-ops, and many that are large, powerful, corrupt, and mired in bureaucracy. On his trip to Peru, Tom got a first hand view of some coops that sometimes do not share premium prices with their farmer members. The farmers do not know exactly what the co-op got paid for the coffee – they only know what the co-op pays them. Fair Trade certifies that the co-operative received the FT price, but it does not verify or certify that the men and women who produce your coffee out in the field were paid a premium, or even an acceptable living wage.

Out of some frustration with what Fair Trade is and isn't, we have introduced our own term. Farm Gate Coffee is the name we give to our direct trade coffee buying program. Farm Gate pricing means that we have negotiated a price directly with the farmer "at the farm gate," so we can easily verify that the good price we pay makes it to the people who do the work, those responsible for the great cup quality of our coffee. Farm Gate is a simple principle that allows coffee producers to make premium prices in reward for

coffee quality, and to reinvest to improve quality even more in the future. We guarantee that Farm Gate prices are 50% over Fair Trade pricing, but often they are 100%+ more than FT minimums.

Farm Gate coffees are from farms we have visited, and with whom

we have an ongoing relationship. Our Farm Gate coffees are handled by middlemen who take their cut on the price, as is the case with Fair Trade coffees. I think the role of middlemen is sometimes denigrated, but it provides a very

sweet
maria's
coffee



crucial role in cup quality. After all, established coffee importers know how containers have to move from higher elevations down to port and quickly out of port to protect the quality of the coffee. They speed the coffee through the process and make sure to avoid unnecessary delays in the humid maritime climates that damage green coffee. We work with exporters and importers who will offer transparent pricing to Sweet Maria's and to the farm for their valuable services. It's all laid out on the table, and we expect them to make a premium handling our tiny lots. It's not easy.

Please enjoy our crude Farm Gate logo. It's not much to look at, but it's not about the logo. We support FT, and continue to offer FT lots. Like all of our coffees, we chose both FT and our Farm Gate coffees first based on quality – which we feel ultimately leads back to how the coffee is produced.

Roasted Postcards

If we have done our job, your order should include a roasted coffee card showing 4 different roast stages. Hopefully this card will be educational. The focus of these 4 images is the roast development from just before 1st crack to Full City, nearing 2nd crack. We had hoped to make a series of cards that people could have at hand while they roast, to compare the results. But there

Sweet Maria's Green Coffee Offering List

as of August 6, 2008 – there are many, many incoming lots weekly. Check the web site – this list is certainly out-of-date!

Central American	1 lb	2 lb	5 lb	10 Lb	20 lb
Costa Rica Asoproaaa Coop Tarrazu	\$5.70	\$10.83	\$24.80	\$47.31	\$87.78
Costa Rica El Puente "Caturra Miel"	\$5.80	\$11.02	\$25.23	\$48.14	\$89.32
Costa Rica Helsar de Zarcero -Villa Sarchi	\$6.10	\$11.59	\$26.54	\$50.63	\$93.94
Costa Rica Organic La Yunta Estate	\$6.50	\$12.35	\$28.28	\$53.95	\$100.10
Costa Rica Vino de Arabia	\$5.80	\$11.02	\$25.23	\$48.14	\$89.32
Costa Rica RIP (Roast In Parchment)	coming				
El Salvador Matalapa Estate Peaberry	\$5.35	\$10.17	\$23.27	\$44.41	\$82.39
Guatemala Acatenango Buena Vista Gesha	\$10.40	1 lb limit			
Guatemala Fraijanes -Finca Agua Tibia	\$5.00	\$9.50	\$21.75	\$41.50	\$77.00
Guatemala Org Finca Ceylan Maragogype	\$5.90	\$11.21	\$25.67	\$48.97	\$90.86
Guatemala Finca La Florencia 100% Bourbon	\$5.15	\$9.79	\$22.40	\$42.75	\$79.31
Guatemala Finca San Jose Ocana	\$5.70	\$10.83	\$24.80	\$47.31	\$87.78
Honduras Organic Marcala -Cocosam Coop	\$4.95	\$9.41	\$21.53	\$41.09	\$76.23
Mexico FTO Chiapas - La Union Coop	\$5.20	\$9.88	\$22.62	\$43.16	\$80.08
Nicaragua Esteli - Nueva Esperanza	\$4.90	\$9.31	\$21.32	\$40.67	\$75.46
Nicaragua Limoncillo Java Longberry Cultivar	\$5.90	\$11.21	\$25.67	\$48.97	\$90.86
Nicaragua Pacamara Peaberry	\$5.90	\$11.21	\$25.67	\$48.97	\$90.86
Panama Auction Lot 10 Esmeralda Gesha	\$17.70	\$33.63	2 Lb Limit		
Panama Auction Lot 5 Esmeralda Gesha	\$10.50	\$19.95			
Panama Boquete Golden Peaberry	\$5.35	\$10.17	\$23.27	\$44.41	\$82.39
Panama Boquete Lerida Estate "Miel"	\$5.90	\$11.21	\$25.67	\$48.97	\$90.86
Panama Carmen Estate 1800+ Meters	\$6.20	\$11.78	\$26.97	\$51.46	\$95.48
South American	1 lb	2 lb	5 lb	10 Lb	20 lb
Brazil Carmo de Minas -Fazenda Esperanca	\$6.10	\$11.59	\$26.54	\$50.63	\$93.94
Brazil Cachoeira "Canario Bourbon"	\$6.90	\$13.11	\$30.02	\$57.27	\$106.26
Brazil Daterra Farms Yellow Bourbon	\$6.20	\$11.78	\$26.97	\$51.46	\$95.48
Brazil Jacu Bird Coffee	\$13.60	1 lb limit			
Brazil FTO Poco Fundo Peaberry	\$5.80	\$11.02	\$25.23	\$48.14	\$89.32
Colombia Antioquia -Jardin Cerulean Warbler	\$5.50	\$10.45	\$23.93	\$45.65	\$84.70
Colombia Huila "Perros Bravos" (3-Star)	\$7.50	\$14.25	\$32.63	\$62.25	\$115.50
Colombia Tolima -Finca Las Florestales	\$5.20	\$9.88	\$22.62	\$43.16	\$80.08
African- Arabian	1 lb	2 lb	5 lb	10 Lb	20 lb
Ethiopia Harar Horse DP -Lot 17406	\$5.30	\$10.07	\$23.06	\$43.99	\$81.62
Ethiopia Organic Dry-Process Koratie	\$5.80	\$11.02	\$25.23	\$48.14	\$89.32
Ethiopia Organic WET-PROCESS Koratie	\$5.80	\$11.02	\$25.23	\$48.14	\$89.32
Ethiopia Dry-Process Limu	\$5.70	\$10.83	\$24.80	\$47.31	\$87.78

are some problems with this idea. To get informative pictures of roasted coffee, you need to photograph your samples with a good macro lens, in a well-lit setting. I use a professional copy stand for macro photos. All the detail in the coffee can be seen, but it appears to have greater surface texture and lighter color than you might see in normal household lighting. Color is, in itself, very hard to reproduce correctly, and darker tones that absorb light (i.e. roasted coffee) tend to appear very different under different lighting. Even the temperatures we reference (from direct K-type thermocouple in the Probat drum sample roaster) are relative. Your measurements will vary. And air roasts have different expansion and coloration that drum roasts. So you might notice the comments I made on the back of the card are about expansion, texture, and color evenness. These are important clues to the level of roast. There's no single, empirical method to communicate degree-of-roast levels ... invariably, there will be asterisks and caveats. Don't forget to taste the coffee and let that influence your next roast. Hey, the card is a freebie, and makes a nice refrigerator decoration if nothing else! -Tom

Sweet Maria's Coffee

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Ethiopia Org. Sidamo DP -Special Selection	\$5.60	\$10.64	\$24.36	\$46.48	\$86.24
Kenya AA Auction Lot #758 -Hiriga	\$5.90	\$11.21	\$25.67	\$48.97	\$90.86
Kenya Auction Lot #425 Karimikui Peaberry	\$5.25	\$9.98	\$22.84	\$43.58	\$80.85
Kenya Auction Lot #643 - Mutitu	\$6.00	\$11.40	\$26.10	\$49.80	\$92.40
Kenya Thika Chania - French Mission Cultivar	\$6.60	\$12.54	\$28.71	\$54.78	\$101.64
Rwanda FT Duhingekawa Women's Coop	\$5.80	\$11.02	\$25.23	\$48.14	\$89.32
Rwanda Kigongoro Nyarusiza	\$5.20	\$9.88	\$22.62	\$43.16	\$80.08
Tanzania Blackburn Estate AA	\$6.10	\$11.59	\$26.54	\$50.63	\$93.94
Yemen Mokha Ismaili	\$7.10	Limit 1 Lb			
Yemen Mokha Sana'ani	\$6.30	\$11.97	\$27.41	\$52.29	\$97.02
Yemen Qishr Tea (1/2 Lb.) OUT	coming soon				
Indonesian- Indian	1 lb	2 lb	5 lb	10 Lb	20 lb
India Anohki Coffee (Liberica)	\$17.40	\$33.06	2 Lb Limit		
India Monsooned Malabar AA	\$5.00	\$9.50	\$21.75	\$41.50	\$77.00
Aged Sumatra Grade One Lintong	\$6.00	\$11.40	\$26.10	\$49.80	\$92.40
Sumatra Blue Batak "Tarbarita" Peaberry	\$5.60	\$10.64	\$24.36	\$46.48	\$86.24
Sumatra Gr. 1 Mandheling	\$5.00	\$9.50	\$21.75	\$41.50	\$77.00
Sumatra Lake Tawar 19+ Extra Bold	\$6.30	\$11.97	\$27.41	\$52.29	\$97.02
Islands- Blends -Etc.	1 lb	2 lb	5 lb	10 Lb	20 lb
Hawaii Ka'u Wet-Process -Will and Grace	\$16.50	\$31.35	2 Lb Limit		
Hawaii Ka'u Dry-Process NanoLot	\$23.20	1 Lb Limit			
Hawaii Ka'u Pulp Natural NanoLot	\$23.20	1 Lb Limit			
SM's Moka Kadir Blend	\$5.60	\$10.64	\$24.36	\$46.48	\$86.24
SM's Espresso Monkey Blend	\$5.00	\$9.50	\$21.75	\$41.50	\$77.00
SM's Classic Italian Espresso Blend	\$4.80	\$9.12	\$20.88	\$39.84	\$73.92
SM's Decaf Espresso Blend	\$5.60	\$10.64	\$24.36	\$46.48	\$86.24
SM's Liquid Amber Espresso Blend	\$5.30	\$10.07	\$23.06	\$43.99	\$81.62
SM's French Roast Blend	\$5.00	\$9.50	\$21.75	\$41.50	\$77.00
SM's Puro Scuro Blend	\$5.40	\$10.26	\$23.49	\$44.82	\$83.16
SM's Roasted French Chicory	\$4.80	\$9.12	\$20.88	\$39.84	\$73.92
Decafs	1 lb	2 lb	5 lb	10 Lb	20 lb
Brazil Cerrado WP Decaf	\$5.30	\$10.07	\$23.06	\$43.99	\$81.62
Costa Rica Tarrazu KVV Decaf	\$5.40	\$10.26	\$23.49	\$44.82	\$83.16
Ethiopia Dry-Process Sidamo WP Decaf	\$5.40	\$10.26	\$23.49	\$44.82	\$83.16
Kenya Auction Lot AA WP Decaf	\$6.20	\$11.78	\$26.97	\$51.46	\$95.48
Mexico FTO Oaxaca WP Decaf	\$5.70	\$10.83	\$24.80	\$47.31	\$87.78
Nicaragua FTO Dipilto WP Decaf	\$5.90	\$11.21	\$25.67	\$48.97	\$90.86
Papua New Guinea Kimel WP Decaf	\$5.80	\$11.02	\$25.23	\$48.14	\$89.32
Sumatra Mandheling WP Decaf	\$5.70	\$10.83	\$24.80	\$47.31	\$87.78
Premium Robustas	1 lb	2 lb	5 lb	10 Lb	20 lb
India Robusta - Sethuraman Estate Nirali	\$5.20	\$9.88	\$22.62	\$43.16	\$80.08
India Jeelan Estate Sitara Robusta	\$5.00	\$9.50	\$21.75	Low stock	
Panama Guyami Indian Robusta Rustico	\$5.50	\$10.45	\$23.93	\$45.65	\$84.70