

Coffee

FACES

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF VIRMAX CAFÉ



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TRACEABILITY is a major issue in the development of a sustainable coffee culture. For many years the market has been dominated by blends made from “face-less coffees”, which are easily interchanged among them. Because of this, price has always been on the top of the priority’s list of most coffee buyers, who are willing to replace a particular ingredient in his blend with a cheaper, but similar coffee, in the search of higher profits.

For many years the quest for coffee growing countries has been to produce as much as possible as cheaply as possible, resulting in coffees that were not too good, but neither undrinkable (there were exceptions though): a “standardized” quality.



The interchangeability between coffees from different origins is what characterizes the Commodity market, being also one of the major differences between it and the Specialty sector.

Differentiation is a key component of the Specialty Coffee industry. We know that each coffee is different, influenced by many factors such as the weather, the botanical varieties, the type of soil, the height at which coffee is cultivated, etc. By being different, a coffee can become unique and irreplaceable.

However, the only way to guarantee uniqueness is by stepping up the traceability of the coffee. Traceability provides a guarantee to the customer as to the exact origin of the coffee, in terms of a specific farm (in the case of Estate coffees) or group of farms (in the case of co-operative grown coffees).

We believe that the Relationship Coffee Programme being developed by Virmax with several small coffee growers associations in Colombia is one of the ways to address to the dilemma of how to trace back the origin of the coffee all the way to the farm. By getting to know the growers and working directly with them, roasters have a traceability guarantee. Because Virmax is the only company between the farm and the roaster’s (or importer’s) warehouse, the customer knows that what is in the bags is exactly what the growers have produced especially for them.

Because of the fragmentation in our industry, it is nearly impossible for a roaster to gain access to the growers. Fortunately, this situation is changing, generating transparency and trust which must be supported by full traceability. Trust, transparency and traceability are cornerstones of the Specialty Coffee industry and the Relationship Coffee Programme.

We would like to invite you to take a peek at the relationship coffees on offer, cup them, taste them, get to know their history, their origins, and find out why working directly with the growers benefits you.

In this edition of Coffee Faces, you will find a brief recollection of the Estate Coffees that we are developing, as well as information on them. Please contact us for further information or samples of any of these coffees at +44 (0) 20 7939 9955. ☪

COFFEE OF THE MONTH:
ESTATE COFFEES
CAFE BOHEMIO
CAFE VIRGEN DE ORO
CAFE LA ROCHELA
CAFE DEL PARAISO 2

DID YOU KNOW? 4



Specialty Coffee
Association Of America

Virmax is a proud member
of the SCAA

ESTATE COFFEES

We have managed to find a very special group of larger farmers, who are actually starting to produce proper Estate Coffees in different regions of Colombia.

THE CONCEPT of single estate coffees is relatively new in Colombia. As you will see in “Did you know?”, below, most farms are small, and the larger ones are geared towards high productivity and not necessarily quality.

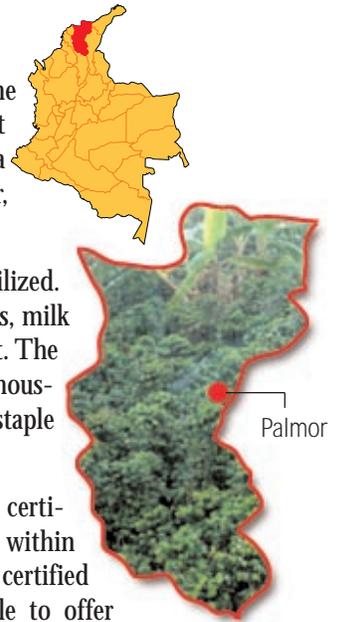
However, we have managed to find a very special group of larger farmers, who are actually starting to produce proper Estate Coffees in different regions of Colombia. We have encouraged their work, helping them improve the quality and marketing of their coffee.

We are generating a Relationship Coffee model for single estate Colombian coffees; opening the gates to the international market to a small but highly committed group of coffee growers on the basis of high quality and total traceability.

As an introduction to our range of Estate Coffees, you will find information on each of them on this edition of Coffee Faces. We would be more than happy to provide you with samples, further information and everything you might need to discover the new Colombian Estate Coffees.

Café Bohemio - Organic / Non organic

Café Bohemio is grown in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta on the Northern Colombian coast. It is an estate comprised by four adjacent haciendas with an area of more than 110 hectares, of which a third is a natural reserve. The Haciendas are located in an area known as Palmor, in the southern part of the Sierra.



The Estate itself is a community, where all resources are re-utilized. Manure from farm animals is used as part of the organic compost; eggs, milk and meat produced by these animals is sold to the farm workers at cost. The workers also benefit from having a minimum guaranteed income and housing; and there are common areas within the farm used for secondary staple crops which are divided among them.

Café Bohemio is currently undergoing the last stages of its organic certification. There are some lots within the Estate that are already certified organic. As such, we are able to offer Café Bohemio in both certified organic and traditional (which is organic but not certified yet) presentations. Being of the arabica typica and caturra varieties, shade grown under native trees, washed using fresh water from the Sierra and sun-dried in stone terraces, Café Bohemio has a full body, medium acidity and an intense floral aroma and flavor.



Café Virgen de Oro

Cultivated in the “Finca La Cumbre” in the municipality of Palermo, in Southwestern Antioquia, Virgen de Oro is a true Estate Coffee. Its beans are milled (wet and dry) and packed at the farm, unlike any other Colombian Coffee.



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The legend tells us that the Virgin Mary chose the area near where the Finca is located to appear and perform one of her miracles, a few seconds were not enough for her to appear; as she fell in love with the natural beauty of the surroundings, she spent several days present on the wall of the rocky mountains to let everybody see her. Those who had the privilege of witnessing her appearance said that the Virgin was covered in gold, and that this golden color was more powerful, deep and brilliant than anything they had ever seen.



Palermo

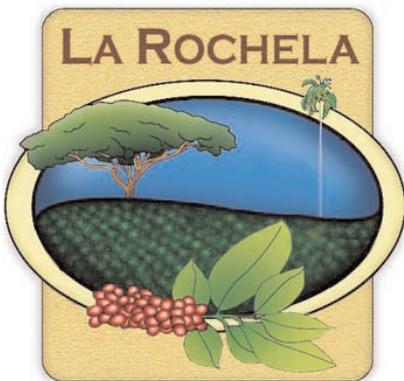
Nowadays, following the legend of the golden Virgin, Virgen de Oro Estate Coffee bears her name.



Virgen de Oro is grown 100% free of any agro chemicals and processed with environmentally clean technologies, in total harmony with the nature that surrounds the Estate. Virgen de Oro has a pronounced floral aroma, high-medium acidity and medium body, resulting in a very clean cup and a strong fragrance.

Café La Rochela - Organic

Café Organic La Rochela is cultivated in the Hacienda La Rochela in the Valle del Cauca province. The Hacienda comprises 200 hectares with 800,000 coffee trees under densely shaded native trees, surrounded by guaduales and several natural creeks that irrigate this beautiful land.



Coffee plants are fertilized using organic compost, produced directly in the farm, which consists of a blend of cattle manure and coffee pulp, with the help of worms. No chemical fertilizers are used.

During the beneficio, coffee is processed using only 1 liter of water per kilo instead of the 40 liters normally used. Insect populations, weeds and diseases are controlled using cultural practices, beneficial insects and native birds.



Trujillo



The coffee is certified organic by OCIA, ECOCERT and JAS

The Hacienda is the region's largest employer, and has invested heavily in improving the standard of living of its 110 permanent employees and 350 temporal employees. There are two schools sponsored by the Hacienda for the worker's children and all employees enjoy proper housing, provided by the Hacienda.

The Hacienda has traditional varieties (such as bourbon and typical) as well as "modern" varieties (such as Colombia and caturra). In addition, some lots are grown exclusively at high altitude (over 5500 ft). Because of this, we are able to offer tailor made cup profiles by using mixes of varieties or 100% traditional varieties and/or strictly high grown coffee.

Café Organic La Rochela has a unique cup profile, combining a well balanced cup with medium-high acidity, a medium body and a nice cherry-blackcurrant flavor.



Café del Paraiso

Café del Paraiso is grown in the Hacienda La Virginia, a family owned, single estate in the Algeciras municipality in eastern Huila.

The Hacienda has been under the control of the Lara family for more than a century. Don Leonidas Lara, the family patriarch was one of the first coffee entrepreneurs in the country, and today one of his granddaughters personally handles all the Hacienda's affairs.

Hacienda La Virginia is the largest single estate coffee plantation in the Huila region, and it is the only one focused on the production of high quality coffee. With over 100 hectares of land, and blessed with favorable climatic conditions and volcanic soil the Hacienda combines modern management techniques with traditional coffee growing methods to achieve high quality and consistency in every cup.

Every worker is constantly trained in every aspect of coffee growing and processing in subjects such as crop and post-harvest management. The Hacienda also contributes to the development of its region, financing a local school where children can obtain a high school diploma.

Café del Paraiso has a delightful floral aroma, with perfect balance between acidity and body, converging into a clean, bright cup. ☕

Please contact us and ask us for new crop samples of these exciting Estate Coffees, available volumes for the upcoming new crop are limited.



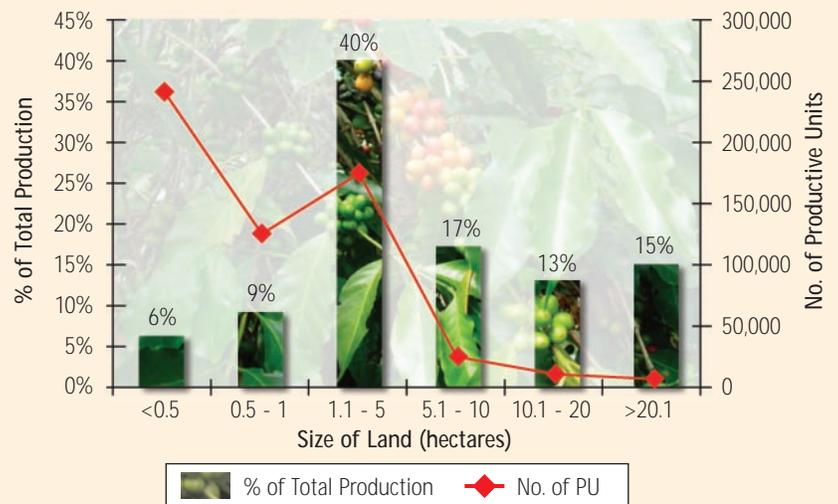
DID YOU KNOW?

SMALL COFFEE GROWERS (defined as farmers with less than 5 hectares of land planted in coffee) are the backbone of the Colombian coffee industry, representing 85% of all Colombian coffee growers and producing 55% of the total output of the country.

On the other hand, large estates, defined as more than 20 hectares planted with coffee, are extremely rare, representing less than 2% of the country's growers, but producing an outstanding 15% of the total output.

This difference is mainly due to the fact that larger farms have adopted new technologies in the cultivation and processing of coffee beans, including new -disease resistant- varieties and drying silos. Therefore, productivity is much higher in larger farms, who also provide temporary work for smaller, local farmers.

This characterization of the industry has meant that over the years the wealth produced by coffee has been distributed among a large group of farmers (although in different levels), but also that the current coffee crisis is affecting a large number of farmers, particularly small ones, who do not have the resources to make a swift transition into other crops, the high productivity of bigger farms and its lower cost per pound of coffee produced. ☕



Fuente: Federación Nacional de Cafeteros.

If you are interested in receiving samples or further information on any of our coffees, please contact us at +44(0)20 7939 9955 (London).
E-mail: coffee@virmax.com