

Specialty Coffee: A Cup of Happiness

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SUMMARY

Indian coffee is the most extraordinary of beverages, offering intriguing subtlety and stimulating intensity. India is the only country that grows all of its coffee under shade. Typically mild and not too acidic, these coffees possess an exotic full-bodied taste and a fine aroma. Indian coffee has a unique historic flavor too. It is often said, the Indian coffee grower pours his life into the crop. Is it any wonder then that India has consistently produced and exported a remarkable variety of high-quality coffees for over one hundred and fifty years. The characteristic flavor and richness of coffee aroma also make it a unique beverage, with almost a thousand volatile compounds being identified in roasted coffee. Consumers have become more knowledgeable about products and have a better appreciation of product quality, affecting the international hospitality industry. In recent years, specialty coffee has exploded and become a taste sensation with coffee lovers.

INTRODUCTION

The saga of Indian coffee began on a humble note, with the planting of 'Seven seeds' of 'Mocha' during 1600 AD by the legendary holy saint Baba Budan, in the courtyard of his hermitage on 'Baba Budan Giris' in Karnataka. For quite a considerable period, the plants remained as a garden curiosity and spread slowly as backyard plantings. It was during 18th century that the commercial plantations of coffee were started. Since then, Indian coffee industry has made rapid strides and earned a distinct identity in the coffee map of the world. In India, coffee is traditionally grown in the Western Ghats spread over Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Coffee is predominantly an export-oriented commodity and 65% to 70% of coffee produced in the country is exported while the rest is consumed within the country. Indian coffee industry earns foreign exchange to the tune of about Rs.4000 Crores. Indian coffee has created a niche for itself in the international market and the Indian Coffees are earning high premium, particularly Indian Robusta which is highly preferred for its good blending quality.

Specialty coffees

Specialty coffees are high-quality coffees that differ from normal coffee with relevance to visual quality or cup or both. Specialty coffee is a term used to refer to coffee that has scored over 80 points on a 100 point scale by the SCAA (Specialty Coffee Association of America). Specialty coffees are markedly different from regular coffees in the sense that they are grown at higher elevations, are traceable and processed carefully once harvested. Every step from growing to brewing is monitored and understood to improve the quality every day.

Coffee growing countries are now focusing on improving their quality at the farm level in an effort to improve their cup scorings. The specialty coffee segment is gaining traction all over the world. In the US, daily consumption of specialty coffee has grown from 9% to 34% in the span of a decade and the UK specialty coffee market is expected to grow by 13% every year. However, India's demand for specialty coffee is increasing due to the introduction of new micro-roasters and better coffee education. Specialty coffee is distinguished by its clear origin, distinction made by careful cultivation practices, the careful routine of plucking, special processing and of course, special branding and special handling and appearance thereafter. As a result, specialty coffees fetch better prices, attract premiums and attract custom. These coffees have a personality, aura, craving and branding of their own.

The Specialty Coffee Association has a series of more detailed specifications (SCA is the union of the Specialty Coffee Association of American (SCAA) and Europe (SCAE)). The SCA sets standards for specialty coffee at every stage of coffee production, including allowable defects in green beans, water standards, and brew strength. Although there are different definitions of specialty coffee according to the different international organisations, there's a general acceptance of a set of three minimum requirements: coffee should have been hand-picked by selective picking of mature beans, scoring 80 or above, maximum 5 defects per 350 g.

Specialty coffees are broadly classified into five categories based on their unique features:

1. Decaffeinated Coffee

Coffee with the caffeine removed artificially is known as decaffeinated coffee. There is a prominent segment of consumers preferring decaf coffees owing to health consciousness.

2. Organic Coffee

Coffee grown without using chemicals and pesticides are in great demand in developed countries because of increasing awareness of the health of consumers and the protection of the environment.

3. High Grown Coffee

The coffees grown at higher elevations i.e. 4000 ft and above are known to possess a distinct flavour and acidity in cups due to the slower development of beans. The coffees are of high quality with dense beans.

4. Estate Coffee (Single Origin Coffee)

Production of good quality coffee by highlighting the special features of the estate can be classified as estate-branded coffees. This may be elevation, variety, cultural practices and special processing techniques. Estate coffees are those that originate on a single farm with common soils and with a distinct identity in terms of flavour and aroma characteristics. Estate coffees are generally more expensive and actually define the specialty coffee market.

5. Variety Coffee

Some of the varieties are known to possess good inherent quality due to the genetic makeup of the plant. Fruits from such varieties can be harvested and processed separately to retain their unique quality. Some of the Indian selections like Kents, Agaro, Cioccie, CxR are unique in their cup quality. Separate processing of these varieties helps in processing their intrinsic quality.

Specialty Coffees of India

Monsooned Malabar AA

Centuries ago, when coffee beans were transported to Europe in sailing ships, a ‘wonderful’ accident occurred. Monsoon winds caused the beans to swell, change colour and acquire an intensely-mellow flavour that won connoisseurs over. Today, this magic is recreated by ‘monsooning’ the finest Arabica beans to produce a world-famous specialty coffee.

Monsooned coffee or coffee beans ‘swollen’ with moisture from the air, is prepared at the curing works situated on the West Coast of Southern India. Stored in special warehouses, moist monsoon winds circulate around the coffee beans, making them swell in size and take on a mellowed but aggressive, musty flavour. This process yellows the bean and reduces the acidity, imparting a heavy, syrupy flatness reminiscent of aged coffees. For preparing monsooned coffees only dry processed Arabica and Robusta beans are used. The coffees are mainly used in blends to mellow and impart richness to rougher, more acidic coffees. The best grade in monsooned coffee is Monsooned Malabar AA.

Mysore Nuggets Extra Bold

The might and grandeur of the monolithic Nandi bull statue on Chamundi Hills of Mysore, is reflected in these large, exotic Arabica beans that make this rare, premium specialty coffee, a connoisseur’s delight. These wonderful and exotic coffees are prepared from washed Arabicas grown in the regions of Chikmagalur, Coorg, Biligiris, Bababudangiris and Shevaroys. The beans are very large, uniform bluish-green in colour, with a clean polished appearance. In the cup, the coffee exhibits full aroma, medium to the good body, good acidity and fine flavour, with a hint of spice. This is a rare, premium coffee and truly represents the best quality coffee from India.

Robusta Kaapi Royale

The stately elephant with its howdah - a canopied seat bedecked with flowers and jewels used during a ceremonial procession – is a sign of Indian royalty. Much like this king of specialty Indian ‘kaapis’, prepared from bold Robusta beans of the best quality.

This coffee is prepared from Robusta Parchment AB from the regions of Coorg, Wayanad, Chikmagalur and Travancore. The beans are bold, round with pointed ends, and grey to bluish-grey in colour. The cup ensures full body, soft, smooth and mellow flavour.



However, there are indeed limitless possibilities when it comes to creating specialty coffee drinks that tailor the taste buds. Various popular choices can be made in preparing coffee using various equipment making them special. A few of them are:

Espresso

It is made by forcing very hot water under high pressure through finely ground, compacted coffee. This process produces an almost syrupy beverage by extracting both solid and dissolved components.

Cafe Americano

It is a style of coffee prepared by adding hot water to espresso, giving a similar strength to but a different flavour from regular drip coffee. The strength of an Americano varies with the number of shots of espresso added.

Cafe latte

It is the Italian name for coffee ("cafe") with milk ("latte"). It is a coffee beverage consisting of strong or bold coffee (sometimes espresso) mixed with scalded milk in approximately a 1:1 ratio

Café mocha

It is a variant of a caffè latte. Like a latte, but a portion of chocolate is added, typically in the form of chocolate syrup, although other vending systems use instant chocolate powder. Mochas can contain dark or milk chocolate.

Frappe

A big favourite in parts of Europe and Latin America, especially during the summer months. Originally a cold espresso, it has more recently been prepared by putting 1-2 teaspoons of instant coffee with sugar, water and ice.

Cappuccino

It is a coffee-based drink prepared with espresso, hot milk, and steamed milk foam.

Irish coffee

It is a cocktail consisting of hot coffee, Irish whiskey and brown sugar, stirred and topped with thick cream. The coffee is drunk through the cream.

Turkish coffee

It is a method of preparing coffee where finely powdered roast coffee beans are boiled in a pot (cezve), with added sugar, before being served into a cup where the grounds settle.

Oliang

It is commonly known as Thai iced coffee, which is an iced coffee drink that blends the coffee together with soybeans, corn, sesame seeds, and other additives. It is traditionally brewed.

Indian (Madras) filter coffee

It is also known as Filter Coffee a sweet milky coffee made from dark roasted coffee beans (70% -80%) and chicory (20%-30%), It is served with coffee to milk ratio of usually 3:1.

Vienna coffee

It is the name of a popular traditional cream-based coffee beverage. It is made by preparing two shots of strong black espresso in a standard sized coffee cup and infusing the coffee with whipped cream (as a replacement for milk and sugar) until the cup is full.

Liqueur coffee

It is a coffee drink with a shot of liqueur. It is usually served in a special liqueur coffee glass, often with whipped cream and sugar.

CONCLUSION

As consumers are more demanding and as the specialty coffee public grow, the quality and differentiation among the various coffee brands will tend to increase, along with specific label information such as types of blends, roasting degree, sensorial attributes, etc. Additionally, a massive research effort is being made with the intent of combining the peculiar flavor of coffee with its biological properties and a series of new coffee-based ‘functional’ beverages and products are being created. With increasing coffee consumption, more attention is focused not only on the flavor and texture of the drink, but also on the impact of coffee on health. Thus specialty coffees can offer a rejuvenating and satisfying sense of feeling with their modified properties.

REFERENCES

www.indiacoffee.org