



Mt Meru Premium Coffee: Plant to Cup

Mt Meru premium coffee is grown primarily by peasant farmers on the slopes of Mt Meru in Tanzania where shade and volcanic soil offer perfect conditions for the growth of premium coffee beans. These plants are tended carefully on these small family farms and beans are picked individually by hand during an extended harvest season. In most cases, the 3 to 5 acre farms are handed down from generation to generation and typical family incomes are \$500 - \$600 per year.

Some of the coffee trees are 20 to 30 years old. There are also new plants that are a new cultivar developed by Tanzania Coffee Research Institute that are insect and disease resistant. This combination of coffee trees is making coffee farming on Mt Meru sustainable.



Planting - New coffee plants begin life in a nursery where they grow in perfect soil and weather conditions and are protected from insects. After 9 months they are transplanted to a new location that often continues to be their home for 20 to 30 years. These plants grow into trees that are similar to cherry trees that blossom every year. Mt Meru coffee farmers tend them carefully including the pruning of branches so that nutrition is available to only productive

branches rather than being shared with unproductive limbs. They are planted so that they will receive maximum nutrition and proper shade.



Harvesting – A coffee tree will start to produce berries after 3 to 4 years. On Mt. Meru, the harvesting season is very long and the maturing process is slow because of the high altitude, which contributes to the high quality of the beans. These berries (coffee cherry) mature from green to deep red color and as they ripen, the coffee cherry is selectively hand-picked. Picking Mt. Meru coffee beans individually rather than with a picking machine helps assure quality.



Pulping, Floating, Washing – Immediately after harvesting, the fruit pulp is removed from the coffee (fruit pits) at processing centers that often operate as cooperatives and employ members of farm families. This processing is done by using pulping machines that use water to help move coffee beans through the process. After de-pulping is completed, the pulp is used as fertilizer for new coffee trees.

After pulping, the beans move to containers of water. The beans that sink in the water are considered good quality and are kept, while the floaters are separated and discarded. Before

they move to the drying racks they are washed again to remove the sweet sugar coating on their surface that would otherwise create a bitter flavor. Only the highest quality coffee beans are used by the Mt. Meru Coffee Project.



Drying – The beans are dried in the sun for several days until moisture is reduced to a specified level. The drying process often takes a number of days in the sun and the coffee beans need to be carefully turned several times by processing center employees to assure even drying. The dried coffee beans are then packed in sisal bags and are stored before being shipped to a coffee mill.



Milling, Sorting, Cupping, Exporting – The beans are shipped to a coffee milling plant where they are processed using modern milling machines. This process removes the parchment layer and the beans are then polished (removing the silver skin). In this process the coffee typically loses 20% of its weight. Finally, the beans are graded and sorted by size and weight. Defective beans are also removed leaving only the green beans that will be exported. Mt. Meru coffee is cupped (taste tested), graded and auctioned before it is loaded in shipping containers for its voyage to Milwaukee where it is carefully warehoused in perfect conditions at our roaster's facility.



Roasting and Grinding – Roasting is done in small batches to fill weekly orders. The freshly roasted coffee is then taken to our processing center where our crew, made up of mostly volunteers, grinds and packages small batches of Mt. Meru Premium Coffee before being shipped to our loyal customers.

The Mt. Meru Coffee Project is helping to improve the standard of living while reinforcing the pride and dignity of the Mt. Meru coffee farmers by paying them a fair price for their premium coffee. *Asante sana!* (Swahili for *Thank you very much*)

www.mtmerucoffee.org