



Coffee Roasters Co-op

"full o' beans" newsletter

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Wolfville/New Minas, Nova Scotia

Issue 11

THE MAGIC, MYSTERY (AND MISERY) OF CHOCOLATE

Coming into chocolate season, we thought it might be interesting to talk a little about chocolate. Like coffee, we tend to take it for granted and don't think about how it is grown and its long and mysterious history.

Much like coffee, cocoa grows naturally as shade crop in tropical climates. Unlike coffee, which grows as a cherry, cocoa grows in pods (similar in size and shape to a small football) that grow up and down the trunk of the tree. The pods are harvested when ripe and broken open to yield the seeds (or beans) which are fermented and then dried just like coffee.

Like with coffee, when cocoa is grown naturally in the shade with companion crops by small farmers, the quality is enhanced and chemical fertilizers and pesticides are not necessary. As a monoculture grown on large plantations however, cocoa too becomes one of the worlds most heavily sprayed food crops and quality is sacrificed.

Other interesting tidbits about cocoa and chocolate:

- Cocoa was first developed by the Maya and became a spicy (not sweet) ceremonial drink
- For 20 some centuries it was a drink of the elite - first Mayan, then Aztec, then European (where it was sweetened).
- With the Dutch inventing the cocoa press in the late 1800's all that changed, chocolate was introduced to the masses and a new industry was born.
- At that time, production shifted from Latin America to West Africa and more recently Asia (encouraged by IMF and World Bank)
- Efforts are now being made to introduce fairness (and quality) into international cocoa trade through a convergence of co-ops of small farmers, fair trade companies and concerned consumers.



*Oh divine chocolate!
They grind thee kneeling,
Beat thee with hands praying
And drink thee with eyes to heaven.*
Marco Antonio Orellana



(for MISERY segment see Phillip Morris & Co. pg.4)

JUST US! VISITS UCIRI

This past fall, I had the opportunity to travel to the lush, high Sierras of southern Oaxaca, Mexico, to represent Just Us! at the 17th Anniversary Festival of the Union of Indigenous Communities of the Isthmus Region (UCIRI), the world's first Fair Trade Coffee Co-op. It was an incredible experience. To see first-hand the positive impact Fair Trade has made in the quality of life and happiness for the members of UCIRI has given me a deeper appreciation for Fair Trade, a trading system that puts people, families and communities at the forefront. Visiting UCIRI truly was empowering and has increased the solidarity between myself; Just Us!, our customers and the farmers. It amazes me that it is coffee, out of all things, that has woven us all together.

(Continued on page 2)



Farmers of the UCIRI Coffee Co-op in the meeting hall





IFAT, The International Federation for Alternative Trade

Just Us! has joined IFAT, a global network of fair trade organizations. There is certainly no shortage of organizations, the problem is deciding which ones are going to best further the agenda of promoting fair or at least fairer trade.

IFAT with its 168 member organizations in 51 countries (mostly poor countries) takes the following positions:

- the world needs a rules based system to regulate international trade
- the World Trade Organization could and should formulate and monitor trade rules that will benefit all people equally
- social and environmental impacts should be assessed and dispute settlement should consider human rights, labour standards and the environment
- poor countries should be allowed to protect their markets and support their agriculture to ensure their food security
- the patenting of all living organisms - animals, plants and micro-organisms and the patenting of essential medicines should not be included in agreements

IFAT concludes:

"It is time to re-build a new, more responsible world economy, founded on principles of sustainable development and placing the human person at the heart of its preoccupations. This re-building must be done peacefully, through dialogue. The liberalization of world trade is not an end in itself. Our goals are to reduce poverty and to further social justice. We call upon our governments to take on this task..."

New Book on Fair Trade

Laure Waridel, one of North America's leading advocates of fair trade and former board member of Transfair Canada has just published a great book on fair trade - Coffee with Pleasure. Although it uses coffee as its main example of unfair international trade, it gives a good overview of global trade practices, the growing protest movement and the power of consumers. The photos are exceptional. It is published by Black Rose Books (1-800-565-9523) or you can order it from Just Us! for \$21.99. (See excerpt on Phillip Morris & Company pg. 4)

Just Us! In Good Taste!



Just Us! has been welcomed as member of the TASTE OF NOVA SCOTIA QUALITY FOOD PROGRAM

We are very honoured to be accepted into this program which gives its seal of approval to the finest of Nova Scotia products from seafood to agricultural products to gourmet preserves and baked goods.

We look forward to participating in many regional and international events to promote quality Nova Scotia products.

For more information: www.tasteofnovascotia.com

WHO GETS WHAT



Non-Fair Trade

Like Co-op's in Canada, UCIRI is founded on the principles of Participatory Democracy where each member has a say and vote on those decisions that impact the Co-op. According to the new President of UCIRI, Romeo Guzman, "We learn from each other what is best for UCIRI." Arriving a few days before the start of the festival, I had a chance to observe a meeting of the Co-op members in the thatched roofed *Casa Comunal* designed purposely with no walls so many people, even a curious Canadian, could join in and feel welcomed. I learned that in the UCIRI Co-op each farmer farms a 5 acre plot and that each plot yields about 1800 lbs. of coffee. To put that number in perspective, at the end of 2001, Just Us! roasted about 40,000 lbs. of UCIRI coffee. That's a lot of cups of coffee. The farmers working for UCIRI receive about \$4000 Canadian each for a year's work. That still doesn't seem like much but it is a lot better than the income from selling coffee under non-fair trade conditions. It's no wonder that coffee growers are amongst the lowest paid agricultural workers on the planet (see "Who Gets What diagram).

Knowing the difficult beginning UCIRI experienced in the early eighties - victims of violent intimidation and reprisals from competitive coffee buyers (coyotes) and processors (between 1985 and 1992, 39 UCIRI members were killed) - it gave me pause to think how much these farmers have sacrificed in affirming their right to be treated fairly. Fair Trade certainly has come along ways since then and still needs to go a lot further. The farmers of UCIRI hope that other roasters will start selling more Fair Trade Coffee as it is good for coffee producers everywhere. Fair Trade does make a difference. This will only happen if more customers persist in asking for Fair Trade coffee.

Over the weekend, I laughed, sang, danced, jammed, ate, shared pictures and stories of Canada (*mucho frio!??*) with the farmers of UCIRI. In the time since, I have a deepening realization that the work we do at Just Us! is more than just selling the best tasting coffee possible, it's also about strengthening livelihoods, environments and friendships. I hope I have more opportunities in the future to spread the word!

Kirk Johnson, Coffee Roaster @ Just Us!

UCIRI Facts

- Most co-ops selling Fair Trade coffee are only able to sell 20-30 % of their coffee as Certified Fair Trade. UCIRI sells 80-100% of their coffee under Fair Trade conditions.
- Approximately 2 containers of last years crop will go to Canadian roasters and 15 containers will go to American markets. The majority of the coffee will go to European Fair Trade Roasters.
- UCIRI's Fair trade coffee is served in the Swiss, Dutch, British, German, and Belgian parliaments.



FAIR TRADE? ORGANIC? SHADE GROWN? RELATIONSHIPS?

Certified Fair Trade - Basically ensures a “fair” price so farmers make a minimal living wage. It is for small-scale farmers organized as co-ops.

Certified Organic - Again most organic coffee is grown by small family farmers who are members of co-ops. Out of conscience or because they cannot afford agricultural chemicals, they put in a lot of extra work to grow coffee traditionally and naturally using composting, terracing, and companion shade trees (from fruit trees to the tallest rainforest hardwoods).

Shade Grown or Bird Friendly - Comes out of concern for clear-cutting of rainforests to grow coffee efficiently as a monoculture (single crop) using lots of chemicals (more than any other food product). No trees - no birds, including migratory bird that we appreciate. Most, but not all, fair trade coffee is grown organically and almost, but not necessarily, all organic coffee would be shade grown

Relationship Coffees - Another term coming along which is also applied in combination with the above. It suggests a meaningful relationship between farmers and roasters of green coffee that ensures the farmers a market and the roasters the best of the harvest. It also requires periodic visits by roasters to growers and vice versa. Otherwise, coffee becomes just a money making commodity detached from the realities of people and places.

It is important that coffee roasters can trace their coffees right back to the importers, processors and farmers. Indeed, everyone who handles the coffee, including the roaster, should have regular, independent organic certification of their procedures to maintain the integrity of the end product.

And Speaking of Relationships...

“The pace of travel and communication today is making our planet seem very small and fragile...”
In seeing what life is really like for farmers, with minds and hearts open, the desire to sustain them and thereby sustain the great coffees they produce is born. In this context, progressive roasters and retailers will make it their business to be ever-more-transparent intermediaries between the farmers who grow great coffee and the customers who support its continued existence.

The old coffee trade model - buying coffee cheaply, blending it into anonymity and using the result to build consumer demand only for one’s own brand - worked in the last century, but it won’t be sustainable in this one. These are issues that apply to farming and farmers everywhere, and if we can make progress in addressing them in our own industry we are sure to find inspiration and allies everywhere as the best and brightest minds in our society strive to create a more equitable and sustainable future.”

Kevin Knox - Allegro Coffee



“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely... broad, wholesome, charitable views can not be acquired by vegetating in one’s little corner of the earth.”

Mark Twain



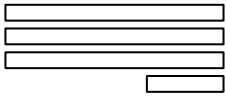
George Orwell’s Cup of Tea (Evening Standard, London, 1946)

Following are George Orwell’s 11 (not your normal 10) points for making the perfect cup of tea. Number 10 is still hotly debated but Orwell argued “by putting the tea in first and stirring as one pours, one can exactly regulate the amount of milk, whereas one is liable to put in too much milk if one does it the other way around”.

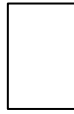
1. Always use Indian or Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) tea.
2. Tea should be made in small quantities in a teapot.
3. The pot should be warmed beforehand.
4. The tea should be strong - 6 heaping teaspoons to one quart of water.
5. The leaves should go straight into the pot; do not use strainers or muslin bags.
6. Bring the teapot to the kettle and not the other way around.
7. After adding boiling water, stir the pot, or give a good shake.
8. Drink tea from a cylindrical cup not the flat shallow kind.
9. Use low-fat milk.
10. Always pour the tea in first, then add the milk.
11. Never add sugar to your tea.

NOTE: Notwithstanding our literary admiration for George, we would beg to differ with points 7 and 11. We find it better (especially for green tea) to let boiling water cool for a few minutes before brewing. It makes for a more mellow tea... and a little honey doesn’t hurt either.





Letters



Hello,

I just picked up your newsletter from the "Big Carrot" in Toronto, where I regularly purchase your coffee. It was wonderful for me to discover your coffee - I now feel good about drinking the stuff, whereas it always felt wrong. Your newsletter is very interesting, and quite down-to-earth, combining your personal experiences with some interesting & touching political insights and words of wisdom. I enjoyed reading it, and especially because I didn't feel as though you were trying to sell me anything - instead, you were just sharing your values. How refreshing!

Karen Penwill

Celebrate World Fair Trade Day May 4, 2002

If you are looking for ideas on how to promote fair trade, check out www.wftday.org (internationally) or www.transfair.ca (in Canada).

When you have an event planned, you can post it on www.wftday.org by emailing: safia.minney@globalvillage.or.jp



*"For my part, I know nothing with any certainty,
but the sight of stars makes me dream."*

VINCENT VAN GOGH



Stan Rogers Festival

We'll be having a coffee stand again this year at the Stan Rogers Folk Festival going from July 5-7

in Canso. We are proud to be not only a vendor, but a sponsor at this wonderful event. Even though none of us get paid to work our butts off for this long weekend, we're still lined up to volunteer.

If you know of any other community festivals or events that might be in need of our coffee or our support let us know.

Hope to see you at Stan Rogers.

www.stanfest.com

Philip Morris and Company

AN INTERESTING tidbit FROM COFFEE WITH PLEASURE (SEE NEW BOOK PG. 2) IS THAT COFFEE FARMERS AROUND THE WORLD OFTEN EARN \$1 US OR LESS PER DAY WHILE THE PRESIDENT OF PHILIP MORRIS, GEOFFREY C. BIBLE EARNS OVER \$5 MILLION (FOR YEAR 2000). PHILIP MORRIS, OF COURSE, IS THE PARENT COMPANY OF MANY OF THE LOW PRICED SUPERMARKET BRANDS OF COFFEE SUCH AS MAXWELL HOUSE, NABOB, SANKA, GENERAL FOODS, ETC.

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, WORLD COFFEE (AND COCOA) PRICES HAVE SUNK TO AN ALL TIME LOW. THIS IS GENERALLY ATTRIBUTED TO AN OVERPRODUCTION CAUSED BY DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES FROM THE WORLD BANK AND THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND*.

THE KINDEST (AND MAYBE NAIVE) INTERPRETATION OF THESE EVENTS IS THAT THE WORLD BANK AND IMF WERE ACTING RATHER INDEPENDENTLY AND WERE SIMPLY OVERZEALOUS IN ENCOURAGING THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES (ESPECIALLY ASIA) TO GROW COFFEE AS AN EXPORT CROP. MORE FRIGHTENING IS CONSIDERING THE (NOT FAR-FETCHED) POSSIBILITY THAT BIG BUSINESS AND BIG GOVERNMENT WERE IN COHORTS WITH THE WORLD BANK AND IMF (OF COURSE THEY ARE, THEY FUND IT) AND THEY PURPOSELY SET OUT TO GLUT THE MARKET WITH LOWER QUALITY, LOWER COST** COFFEE AND CHOCOLATE TO REDUCE PRODUCTION COSTS AND THUS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE THE BOTTOM LINE FOR BIG BUSINESS.

IT MAY SEEM FAR-FETCHED BUT IN REALITY FOR THE MAJOR PLAYERS IN COFFEE (NESTLE, KRAFT, PHILIP MORRIS) AND CHOCOLATE (NESTLE, MARS, HERSHEY, PHILIP MORRIS) DRAMATIC SHIFTS IN MARKET SHARE ARE UNLIKELY UNLESS THEY CAN BUY OUT A COMPETITOR. SO THE ONLY WAY TO IMPROVE THEIR BOTTOM LINE, WHICH IS ALL THAT REALLY MATTERS, IS TO REDUCE COSTS.

HOW COULD IT EVER BE JUSTIFIED IF IT WAS INDEED A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO TAKE FOODS FROM THE MOUTHS OF TENS OF MILLIONS OF HARD WORKING PEASANT FARMERS TO FURTHER ENHANCE THE OBSCENE WEALTH OF CORPORATE EXECUTIVES (AND INVESTORS). APOLOGIES FOR ASKING SUCH QUESTIONS LEADING UP TO VALENTINE'S DAY AND EASTER BUT IT SEEMS LIKE THEY HAVE TO BE ASKED.

*FOR COCOA, THE PROCESS WAS EVEN SIMPLER. CREATE OVERPRODUCTION AND THUS REDUCE PRICES BY ENCOURAGING THE NEW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO CHANGE RULES GOVERNING COMPOSITION OF CHOCOLATE - ALLOWING CHEAPER VEGETABLE FATS TO REPLACE MORE EXPENSIVE COCOA BUTTER (WHICH ALSO BECOMES CHEAPER BECAUSE OF OVER-SUPPLY).

**THE TWO NECESSARILY GO HAND IN HAND.

Types of Chocolate

Dark chocolate - cocoa paste, cocoa butter and sugar

Milk chocolate - cocoa paste, cocoa butter, sugar and milk

White chocolate - cocoa butter, sugar and milk

The "Full o' Beans" Newsletter is published by Just Us! Coffee Roasters Coop. Editor is Jeff Moore.

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