

BRAZILIAN COFFEES IMPRESS NORTHWESTERN ROASTERS, BARISTAS

São Paulo-based exporter NUCOFFEE has always been innovative in terms of finding quality growers throughout Brazil, and showcasing their family stories and microlots in photos and carefully crafted accounts that make the roasters and baristas who will work with those coffees feel up-close-and-personal with not only the beans, but the people who grew them.

In an effort to further bridge the gap between growers and Stateside specialty coffee professionals, NUCOFFEE debuted a cupping program in Portland, Ore., in late September. Held at the American Barista & Coffee School's spacious and comfortable facilities in Portland's spectacular waterfront district, the event took place over the course of one day, with both a morning and an afternoon cupping, complete with special guests.

Roasters, green buyers, café owners, and baristas were invited to the two cuppings, and each of the 40-person segments was almost at capacity. These Northwest coffee professionals began each session by meeting and greeting one another, as well as receiving warm welcomes from the NUCOFFEE team on site: Daniel Friedlander, Juan Gimenes, André Peres, Roberta Armentano, and Jack Robson, as well as Christian Wolthers, of Wolthers America, who was on hand to discuss the complexities of Brazilian coffee prior to the cupping.

Attendees were fascinated by the discussion of Brazilian specialty coffees, especially in light of Brazil's long history in the industry as the world's largest producer. Coffee production in Brazil is responsible for one third of all coffee grown in the world, but that hardly means everything coming out of the country is high quality. However, NUCOFFEE's mission is to source only the most remarkable coffees from the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Paraná.

One of the exporter's most exceptional practices is encouraging the identification of areas where differentiated coffees will be grown. NUCOFFEE understands and appreciates the fact that the availability of microlots is extremely limited, and thus has introduced an initiative to find more partners producing top quality beans. According to the NUCOFFEE technical team working closely with growers, many have hidden treasures in their crops. They need to be found, treated in a special way, and taken to the international market as differentiated products.

NUCOFFEE currently holds in its portfolio 19 coffees classified as microlots, each from a different farm. To be classified as such, these coffees need to rate at least 83 points according to the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) methodology, in addition to having pronounced and distinct sensory notes. Microlots are usually indicated by cooperative cuppers and other Q-graders trained by NUCOFFEE. But an actual assessment needs to be performed at the NUCOFFEE lab located in Varginha, Minas Gerais, to confirm that. Testing is a very demanding process, and only 25–30 percent out of the samples deemed as potential microlots are actually confirmed as such.

More than with any other product, microlots demand a complete process, from the team assisting in the fields, to marketing and selling. At the farms, NUCOFFEE consultants help identify the best producing areas, having special soil features, the quality, and health of the plant, and shading, among others. But the natural features alone are not enough for the production of micro lots. The technical work includes giving special treatment to the crops, the harvest, and a detailed sorting of the best beans and a perfect drying process. All these elements combined, will result in the perfect cup of coffee.

At the September event in Portland, green buyers, baristas and roasters were



At top, NUCOFFEE's Quality Manager, André Peres, cups some of the lovely Brazilian coffees on offer at the recent cupping in Portland. Below, Marcus Boni of the Specialty Coffee Association of America—on hand to help and answer questions on behalf of the Roaster's Guild, one of the event sponsors—helps set up the cupping expertly.

impressed with the offerings on the table. "I definitely found some coffees I really liked," said Sam Purvis, a barista for Coava Coffee in Portland who spent two weeks traveling to coffee farms in Brazil in July. "It reminds me what wonderful coffees there are available in Brazil. I think this is going to be a big year."

—Sarah Allen

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