

# ETHIOPIAN COFFEE



**JUSTTERRACOFFEE**

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# COFFEE



## Ethiopian Coffee Regions, Flavor Profiles, and Grading Standards

Ethiopia, recognized as the birthplace of coffee, offers an unparalleled diversity of coffee varieties due to its unique landscapes, altitudes, and the abundance of heirloom plants. This richness manifests in distinct regional flavor profiles, processing methods, and grading standards. Specialty coffee buyers often classify Ethiopian coffees based on their region, altitude, and sensory attributes rather than specific varieties.



# ETHIOPIAN COFFEE

## ETHIOPIAN COFFEE REGIONS

Here are the main Ethiopian coffee regions and associated flavour profiles.



COFFEE GROWING REGIONS OF ETHIOPIA

# Sidamo

A large area in the fertile highlands in the Rift Valley, Sidamo is one of three trademarked coffee regions in Ethiopia (along with Harrar and Yirgacheffe). It's 1,550 to 2,200 m.a.s.l and has ample rainfall, optimum temperatures, and fertile soil.

It's reported that around 60% of coffee produced here is washed processed. Sidamo coffees are known for their rich, full body, vibrant crisp acidity, and floral and citrus notes



# Green Coffee Beans

# Yirgacheffe

Yirgacheffe is part of the Sidamo region, but it's sub-divided into its own trademarked micro-region due to its exceptional coffees. Most of the coffees produced here are washed processed, although some naturals are also produced.

Yirgacheffe coffee can be characterised as a bright, medium-bodied coffee with distinct floral tones in aroma, an intense and complex flavour, flowery, medium to pointed grandly exhilarating acidity, flavour-saturated finish with good and extended aftertaste.



# Harrar

This is a wild Arabica that is grown on small farms in the Oromia region (formerly Harrar) at elevations between 1,400 and 2,000 metres. It is typically natural processed.

Harrar is known for its intense flavour and fruity acidity. It is described as rich and pungent with strong hints of blueberry or blackberry. It is typically heavy bodied and has been likened to dry, red wine. Its intensity means it is most commonly used in espresso blends, rather than single origin.





# Limu

Limu coffee grows in the southwest of Ethiopia at between 1,100 to 1,900 m.a.s.l. A washed coffee with relatively low acidity, it has a well-balanced body and a distinct spicy flavour that is pleasantly sweet and often has floral notes.



# Jimma

This region in the southwest of Ethiopia is a large producer of commercial-grade coffee. It grows at an altitude of 1,400 to 2,100 m.a.s.l. Also spelled as Djimmah, coffees from this region are reportedly best when washed and can take on a medicinal flavour if natural processed.



## ETHIOPIAN COFFEE GRADES

Ethiopian coffees are also graded to ensure quality, from the exceptional Grade 1, known for intense aroma and complex notes, to Grade 4, which still reflects Ethiopian coffee's unique characteristics. Lower grades are generally not utilized by specialty buyers

This framework not only highlights Ethiopia's role as a coffee giant but also guides enthusiasts and professionals in selecting the finest beans to suit their tastes and needs.

**Grade 1:** Natural (dry processed) and Washed (wet processed) coffees alike in the G1 tier are top-notch, almost always consisting of the highest quality specialty coffee beans that are carefully sorted and have an intense aroma and complex taste with a range of flavors, including fruity acidity, well-balanced body, and complex notes of floral, berry, citrus, and tea-like tones. The green coffee prep is typically pristine and will easily pass SCA criteria for defect counts. These coffees always cup well with delicate flavors, bright acidity and medium body, and can sometimes reach the stratospheric, mythical realm of 90+ points. Expect the iconic floral notes paired with regionally distinctive and process-driven sweet fruit tones. Both Grade 1 washed and natural options for the discerning coffee lover.

**Grade 2:** Widely available specialty grade beans, often arriving a little earlier and at lower price points than their Grade 1 counterparts, there can be some good deals on great coffees with excellent sweet flavor in this category. The green also possesses an excellent quality, although they may have slightly smaller sizes or a few more secondary defects compared to Grade 1. However, they still maintain distinctive flavors and are sought after in the specialty coffee market.

**Grade 5 and Below:** we do not purchase any Ethiopian coffee beans below Grade 4.

**Grade 3:** Because of awkward differences in grading defects in washed versus natural coffees, Grade 3 can become a repository for some really nice tasting, mostly cleanly sorted naturals. Thus, we exclusively buy natural coffees in this tier, and those we purchase we generally consider flavorful, easily cupping in the specialty tier often up to 85+ points in most cases. Natural G3 coffee tend overall to simply be less intense than G1 Naturals, possessing similar berry-forward fruity flavors but may lack some of the complexity and distinctiveness found in higher grades.

**Grade 4:** we buy natural Grade 4 coffee that meet certain cup requirements, cupping for us at least 80 points (SCA) and above. While they may not exhibit the same level of complex flavor as the higher grades, they can still offer a satisfying taste experience with distinctive light earthiness, heavier body, spicy flavors, and noticeable Ethiopian coffee characteristics like dried fruity notes and chocolaty depth. On visual inspection, this coffee will be notably less clean than higher grade standards (containing avarying amount of under-ripes and other secondary flaws which may, when roasted, present as quakers) but still frequently meets SCA standards for Export Grade. While we observe frequent quakers in almost all G4 naturals, we have no tolerance for primary sensory defects.

## COFFEE PROCESSING METHODS

### Natural/Dry Processing

In the dry coffee processing, harvested coffee is spread in thin layers and dried or dried on drying racks, under the direct influence of the sun. Preliminary processing stations have different points depending on the size of the farm or the farming area. Some use brick patios; Others use special drying racks to help air circulate around the coffee cherries. Based on the heat and the level of sunlight during the day, coffee is considered to be dried or put in a shady area to limit the negative effects of sunlight. To prevent mold, rot or fermentation, the cherries are turned regularly. After being dried, the skin and flesh of the coffee are removed mechanically and the green coffee is transported to storage before export.

The disadvantage of this method is the lack of synchronization. Therefore, it is a necessary requirement that rigorous testing and tasting should be carried out to ensure a uniform taste. Normally, coffee harvested and sorted in a batch needs to be of equal quality in all beans.

Dry coffee processing can also be done in another way, through a technique known as "pasa". Instead of being harvested and dried on the floor, the coffee cherries are left whole and dried right on the tree. This method gives a slightly different flavor.

Coffee prepared by the self-drying method will have a very different taste, the acidity is also limited. With this experience, this method creates two streams of opinions: some like it and some don't. The natural processing adds a fruity and sweet taste to the coffee beans. Typical flavors are blueberry, raspberry and wine. Dry processed coffee when compared to wet processed coffee has a taste similar to red wine, creating a different and novel feeling when enjoying. Coffee products have a clear flavor spectrum, are easier to exploit than the other two methods, and are easily accessible to the enjoyer. However, they can also be annoying for those who don't like the wild look.

The method is relatively environmentally friendly because the amount of waste after the final product is generated is very little.



In the wet process, water is used to wash the skin and pulp off the fruit of the coffee cherry. The coffee cherries are then placed in large vats of water to separate the defective beans (those with less density which float on top). At this point, the sticky-sweet layer of mucilage is still on the bean. Mucilage is water insoluble. To remove it, the beans must ferment (usually in large tanks with water). During the fermentation process, enzymes present in the coffee cherry eat away at the mucilage, converting the sugars into acids, gases, and/or alcohol. Ever have a coffee that tastes almost like wine? That is a flavor caused by fermentation! After the fermentation process, the coffee is then rinsed free and clean of any residuals with water. The beans are then dried out in the sun using either raised beds made of screens, large flat patios, or with mechanical dryers. After these steps, the coffee is rested and then milled, resulting in a clean, polished bean ready for the roaster.

The wet process generally guarantees a cleaner and more consistent flavor than other methods, especially the natural/dried method. It is often preferred (particularly by large batch roasters) because it allows for a great deal of quality control and consistency in the flavor of the bean as well as the roasting outcome. Farmers prefer the wet method because, despite all the steps involved, it is much faster and much less labor intensive than the dry method.

## Washed (Wet) Process



## Honey Process

To begin, the farmer just takes the adequately cooked coffee fruits from the plants during the harvest stage. This is significant because, when the fruit is fully mature, the new mucus layer contains sufficient sugar and acid to accelerate the fermentation of the coffee beans throughout the drying process.

The drying process is exceedingly complicated and needs meticulous balancing and computation. When the coffee beans have not yet absorbed the flavor from the mucus layer, it is important not to dry them too soon. It's also difficult to dry the coffee beans too slowly; otherwise, the beans would ferment too much and you'll wind up with moldy, worthless seeds.

To attain the ideal balance, you must keep track of the grain's properties during the drying process. The mucus layer remains connected to the surface of the dried coffee beans, allowing them to cling together on the drying rigs. Throughout the drying process, the farmer must continually distribute and mix the coffee beans to ensure that they retain the required moisture.

Honey coffee production takes a long time since the coffee beans collect moisture from the mucus and the air every night before being dried the following morning



Ever have a coffee that tastes almost like wine?

# COFFEE PREPARATION STYLES



## Modern Brewing



## Jebena Buna Ceremony

A three-step ceremony: roasting, brewing, and serving.



## Cold Brew

Best for naturally processed coffees with fruity profiles.





# ETHIOPIAN COFFEE

## SIDAMO COFFEE

Washed and sun dried | Altitude: 1550-2200m (5080-7210Ft)

Cup: Bright acidity, Medium body with spicy and citrus flavors.

A wet-processed (washed) Ethiopian coffee best known for its rich, full body (mouth feel), sweet and complex flavor, low acidity, floral aroma, and a finish that is bright and soft.

**Sidamo green coffees** are grown in the Province of Sidamo in the Ethiopian highlands at elevations from 1,500 up to 2,200 meters above sea level. These elevations qualify the beans as Strictly High Grown (SHG) / Strictly Hard Bean (SHB) – elevations where the best Ethiopian coffees grow more slowly and therefore have more time to absorb nutrients and develop more robust flavors based on the local climate and soil conditions.

**Sidamo coffees** are known for their rich body that is very complex along with a bright and vibrant aftertaste that are fairly consistent from year to year, making this a staple Ethiopian coffee for any coffee roaster.

Screen size- 14  
Moisture content  
For washed 11 – 12%  
For Sundried 10 – 11%

## YIRGACHEFFE COFFEE

Washed and sun dried | Altitude: 1770-2200m (5790-7210Ft)

Cup: Bright acidity, medium body marked jasmine and lemon flavors.

**Yirgacheffe coffee** Known for its sweet flavor and aroma with a light to medium body. It is spicy and fragrant, and are frequently reviewed and rated as some of the highest quality Arabica coffees in the world. A fine Ethiopian Yirgacheffe coffee displays a bright acidity along with intense, clean tastes and a complexity of floral notes in the aroma, sometimes with a hint of toasted coconut. Cupping notes frequently mention the aftertaste being vibrant, and the coffee may exhibit undertones of berry or wine.

**Yirgacheffe coffee** is a wet processing (washed) coffee grown at elevations from 1,700 to 2,200 meters above sea level, and is considered the best high grown coffee in southern Ethiopia, an exotic coffee region known for fine coffees. These elevations qualify Yirgacheffe as Strictly High Grown (SHG) / Strictly Hard Bean (SHB) coffees, where coffees grow slowly due to the altitude, allowing additional time for the tree to deliver nutrients to the coffee and develop the best flavors.

Screen size- 14  
Moisture content  
For washed 11 – 12%  
For Sundried 10 – 11%

## LIMU COFFEE

Washed and Sun dried | Altitude: 1400-2100 (4590-6880Ft)

Cup: a well-balanced cup, medium acidity and body with distinct winy flavors.

**Limu coffee** is a high-quality wet-processed (washed) Ethiopian coffee that exhibits a relatively low acidity yet is somewhat sharp. The brewed cup is distinguished by its well-balanced body (mouth feel) and noticeable winy and spicy flavors, often fruit-toned, pleasantly sweet and vibrant with floral overtones.

**Limu coffee** is grown at elevations ranging from 3,600 to 6,200 feet in southwest/south central Ethiopia producing medium-sized coffee beans with a distinctive roundish shape and green color.

Screen size- 14  
Moisture content  
For washed 11 – 12%  
For Sundried 10 – 11%

## JIMMA COFFEE

Washed and Sun dried | Altitude: 1400-2100 (4590-6880Ft)

Cup: A well balanced cup, medium acidity and body with distinct winy flavor.

An excellent, low-acid Ethiopian coffee when it is wet-processed (washed). A natural sun dried coffee; fair light medium acidity, good heavy body, best quality; hard balanced cup flavor. A coffee with tastes, that have a hint of nuttuned aroma; and pleasant after taste are the attraction in this coffee.

**Jimma Coffee** is grown at elevations from 4,400 to 6,000 feet above sea level within the biggest catchment area in Ethiopia.

Screen size- 14  
Moisture content  
For washed 11 – 12%  
For Sundried 10 – 11%



Ever have a coffee that  
tastes almost like wine?

## NEKEMTE COFFEE

Washed and sun dried | Altitude: 1700-2200m (5570-7210ft)

Cup: Good acidity, medium body with fruity finish.

Nekemte Coffee is known for its pleasant acidity and healthy body and exhibits a slight yet distinct fruity flavor. This coffee has good acidity, medium body and pleasant body and pleasant fruity flavor. A gourmet grade coffee that brings strength laced with flavor.

Nekemte Coffee is grown at elevations between 4,900 feet and 5,900 feet above sea level.

Screen size- 14

Moisture content

For washed 11 – 12%

For Sundried 10 – 11%





