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## History Of Kenya Coffee

By Peter Bernard

The birth place of coffee is relatively close to Kenya but getting it there was not an easy task and full of bloodshed. The Arabs who controlled coffee enslaved thousands of Kenyan's where they worked on the coffee plantations in Kenya and Arabia. This was followed by the British settlers around 1900 who quickly assumed control over the country which led to more bloodshed.

In the first part of the 20th century the interior was settled by British and European farmers who became rich by farming coffee on the backs of the Kenyan workers. By the 1930's the farmers powers had become very strong. Even with over 1 million Kikuyu tribe members calling it home they had now real land claims according to the Europeans. To protect their interest the wealthy Europeans banned them from growing coffee, introduced a hut tax and gave them less and less for their labor. The Kikuyu were forced to leave their land and go to the cities in order to survive. This legal slavery of the population continued until the century until the British relinquished control in 1960. Despite all this bloodshed and slavery Kenya coffee has flourished and is among one of the finest cups in the world.

All Kenya coffee grown is Arabica coffee grown on the rich volcanic soil that is found in the highlands of the country. Today around 250,000 Kenyans are employed in the production of coffee. Most is produced by small land holders that are members of cooperatives that process their own coffee. Still, even with this Kenya coffee's specialty status Kenya coffee farmers still remain among the poorest in the world. In 2001 a farmer producing 1,007 kg crop would only earn £20.14 for his labor, that same coffee is available at specialty stores for \$10 + per pound.

Recently Kenya farmers have introduced the Ruiru 11 hybrid plant and it is causing concern amongst true Kenya coffee lovers. This is because it may lack the traditional Kenya coffee attributes that coffee aficionados love. The Kenya Coffee Board is trying to promote Ruiru 11 as an alternative to the

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farmers but their efforts are overshadowed by the rumors that it tastes like a low grade coffee from a different country. History will have to be the judge to see who is correct.

Kenya coffee has a bright acidity and a wonderful sweetness with a dry winy aftertaste. A really good Kenya coffee will also have a black-current flavor and aroma. Some of the worlds finest coffees come from Kenya and as a single origin coffee it wins praise at the cupping table. Kenya has this level of quality through a government-run system that offers rewards to farmers for producing better quality coffee. This policy has lead to steady improvements and consistent improvements in the cups quality. Each lot of Kenya coffee, if it is from a large farm or a small co-op has to undergo rigorous testing for quality by the Coffee Board of Kenya.

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### **Coffee From Kenya**

**By Valerie T**

Mount Kenya is one of the tallest peaks on the planet. That's an appropriate metaphor for the coffee that comes from this region, since coffee from Kenya is one of the finest brews on Earth.

But beyond literary allusions, there's a real benefit to the area in which these superb beans are grown. The high plateaus of Mount Kenya provide excellent climatic conditions for growing coffee plants.

Add to that the volcanic soil and you have a stellar combination for growing some of the world's finest coffee beans.

In this region there are now thousands of small farms, farms that may average only a half acre. But thanks to those small plots, individual, careful attention can be given to the plants.

Fortunately, there also exists a system of cooperatives that allows these small farmers to efficiently market their product. Coffee drinkers everywhere are the beneficiaries.

Coffee from Kenya is famous for its intense flavor and full body. That flavor isn't overwhelming, though. For reasons known best to coffee chemists, the strong acidity of Kenyan coffee is well-balanced resulting in a pleasant tang, rather than a bitter jolt.

Some of that heady flavor is the result of using primarily AA beans in gourmet Kenyan coffee. The ratings – AA, AB, PB, C, E, TT, and T – refer, not directly to the quality, but to the size of the bean. But size matters.

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The larger the bean, the greater the accumulation of fine coffee oils. It's those oils that produce many of the hundreds of compounds that combine to produce a fine cup. The larger the bean, all other things being equal (which, admittedly, isn't always the case) the more heady the aroma and the more flavorful the cup.

Though each individual coffee aficionado will naturally have his or her favorite, anyone who enjoys fine coffee will give a Kenya AA high marks. It is the perfect way to start a busy day, or sooth the nerves after a hectic afternoon. Try some and find out for yourself why.

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