



An initiative from **syngenta**

NEWSLETTER Nº 15 | DECEMBER 2010

EXPERIENCE OUR COFFEES

WWW.NUCOFFEE.COM.BR



NUCOFFEE WORLD

COFFEE QUALITY MINUTE

Program invests in videos showing producers the good post-harvest practices



PHOTO COURTESY

Always aiming at designing new ways to educate the producer in adding more quality to the final product, NUCOFFEE invests in another initiative: video training classes called *Minuto da Qualidade* (Coffee Quality Minute).

The program provides simple but timely and relevant suggestions about the main production stages of coffee. The training includes ten themes including dividing the farm into large fields, quality identification, monitoring drying, use of mechanical dryers, coffee screening, and storage, among others. These themes cover the “ten commandments for coffee quality”, explains Prof. Flávio Meira Borém, Agronomic Engineer with a Ph.D. degree in Farming Products Processing from the Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA).

The videos are 2 to 2.5 minutes long and were all recorded by Professor Borém himself. NUCOFFEE invited him because of his extensive knowledge of post-harvest issues, in addition to his excellent teaching skills and ability to summarize the content within the format and time requirements.

The training material - also offered in a version with English subtitles - is hosted by **TV Syngenta**, available to those who are interested in the subject, such as roasters, consumers, and baristas, who will also greatly benefit from this knowledge.

The TV is an ongoing source of contact for partners, and an initiative of NUCOFFEE’s proposal to provide support as well as know-how to the producer, together with projects such as workshops on quality and improvement programs. The platform is organized in several programs that, together, aim at improving the quality of coffee produced by the Brazilian grower.

Once the ten recorded themes have been promoted, NUCOFFEE plans to invest in continued efforts, but according to Borém, using a new approach: “Along with presenting the program, we must invest in closer interaction with producers, using the format ‘ask the teacher.’” The new format will cover themes and questions received directly from the coffee grower. “The idea is to bring the grower closer to research and the university, demystifying the “academy” as something unreachable,” adds Borém.

For Borém preparing the programs was no big issue: “I have been researching, doing presentations and providing training programs for 20 years. These themes are therefore part of my daily work routine as a researcher and professional speaker.”

According to Borém, the difference lies on the format in which the information is made available. “I am careful to learn ahead of time the type of audience I will be interacting with, so that the message is conveyed as seamless and accessible as possible.” For NUCOFFEE, the professor’s work is consistent with its goal, and is presented in a very natural way.

With the purpose of spreading this knowledge, NUCCOFFEE wants the producer to fully incorporate these quality messages into their working procedures. Borém, the initiative's best promoter, acknowledges the importance of the platform: "NUCCOFFEE is offering a direct communication channel between scientific development and the producer's reality".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

INTERVIEW WITH MICRO ROASTER GEORGE HOWELL

Howell was one of the promoters of the *Specialty Coffee Movement* in the 70's

George Howell was one of the pioneers in advocating coffee quality. Today, he is the head of the George Howell Terroir Coffee Company, a mini roaster of specialty coffees, and travels around the world searching for the best beans to roast and sell. Below, he talks about his journey.

HOW DID YOU JOIN THE COFFEE WORLD?

I was born in New Jersey, but moved to Berkeley, California in the 60's, where the Specialty Coffee Movement was born. I had the opportunity then to meet Alfred Peet, founder of Peet's Coffee. I remember very well the first time I saw his shop. I was fascinated by those people holding porcelain cups full of coffee. I parked the car, went into the shop, and ordered one. It was an amazing experience, such a wonderful aroma. When I moved to Boston with my wife Laurie, we envisioned an opportunity. We were disappointed with the poor quality of the local coffee and decided to start Coffee Connection. Only 10 years later I was able to travel and see other coffee shops. I worked very hard during that period, but have also learned a lot.

HOW DID COFFEE CONNECTION DEVELOP?

Our intention was really to improve the quality of coffee served in Boston. I began studying about growing, processing, roasting, and preparing fine coffees. By the 90's we already had 24 coffee shops in the area, but in 1994 we sold the chain to Starbucks.

DID YOU DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM THE COFFEE WORLD AFTER THE SALE?

I withdrew from the "coffee business" and ended up getting more involved with the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) and the International Relations Committee (IRC), which led me to be a consultant for the United Nations (UN) for a joint project they developed with the International Coffee Organization (ICO). After 1997, I started to work as a quality consultant for the Gourmet Project managed by the UN. I visited Brazil several times during this period.

AND WHAT IS YOUR EVALUATION OF BRAZIL?

Brazil is growing in the coffee business. When I moved here, in 1999, the market was inexistent. Now I see the market being developed, with a positive future. Some coffees produced in Brazil are outstanding, there is an amazing diversity. The industry is very organized and structured, and without having been exposed to this professional approach I would not have been able to achieve what I did in other countries.

AND WHAT ARE THE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES IN THIS MARKET?

Even today, if we go to any coffee shop, we are probably going to see the name of the roaster but not of the farm. The only way we can have significant improvement is to focus on the farm, to provide growers with an incentive to produce a better product, without depending on a patronizing relationship.



PHOTO GUILHERME GOMES/CAFÉ EDITORA

COFFEE AROUND THE WORLD

FRENCH PRESS

How it works, what beverage it makes



PHOTO ALEXIA SANTI

Popular in Europe, the French press - or cafetière - is a coffee maker, its name related to how it prepares coffee, and introduced in Brazil less than a decade ago. It uses a plunger to brew the coffee.

To make the coffee, the bean is first ground and then placed in a press that resembles a pot. Hot water is poured in the pot and stirred with the ground coffee, using a spoon. After 4-5 minutes for the infusion, the coffee powder is separated from the water with the help of a plunger, which is lightly pressed against the bottom of the pot, placing the finished beverage on top and the coffee grounds in the bottom.

For a successful brewing, the coffee must be medium to coarse ground. This is the only way the filtered coffee can be separated from the grounds when pressed, without too many particles suspended in the beverage and poured into the cup when serving. An average of 75 grams of ground beans are needed to make one liter of coffee. The water should not be boiling when in contact with the coffee, to avoid burning the powder as this would eliminate some of its sensorial characteristics and emphasize the bitterness.

Some experts believe that the result from a French press is similar to the professional cupping that also uses coffee infusion. With this method, however, the grounds remain at the bottom of the cup by gravity only, and the crust formed on the surface by the coffee oils is removed with a spoon. Some baristas have recently improved the French press method,

removing the crust resulting from the infusion in a way similar to cupping. This process is needed to avoid oils from creating a coating on the tongue and thus limiting its taste.

A type of filtered coffee, the French press captures more of the good coffee aroma and flavor. The coffee maker is sold in several sizes and materials, such as glass and acrylic, and the only drawback being that the coffee does not stay warm for very long.

INNOVATION

STORING RAW BEANS

New methods of stocking coffee to keep quality

As it is a perishable product, coffee tends to lose its characteristics gradual and naturally. Therefore, there are external factors that must be controlled to avoid or to slow down the deterioration of the beans. By absorbing air humidity, coffee becomes heavier and receives the aromas and flavors of the environment. High temperatures can facilitate the proliferation of mould and the attack of fungus and bacteria; while light and oxygen can cause the beans to become oxidized and whitened.

Thus, the ideal condition of storing beans includes fresh, dry, clean place with no light. The warehouse and the bags must be impermeable and protect the beans from oxygen action.



PHOTO JUTE: ÉRICO HILLER/CAFÉ EDITORA / BAG: COURTESY

FROM JUTE TO BAG

In Brazil and all over the world, almost all green coffee is stored in 60kg jute sacks. Although the weight of the sacks has become a labor problem, the market has adapted to this standard, both for negotiation reasons and for the organization of logistics of transporting the coffee in the various phases of its trade. Ten years ago, it was the only option in the market, but, nowadays, this has been changing.

On the one hand, jute sacks are being replaced by polypropylene bags, which are bigger, impermeable, more economical, and better to preserve the quality of the product. On the other hand, higher quality coffee is being traded in even smaller packages, which present advanced technology and longer preservation capacity.

Jute sacks have micro-holes that result from the weaving of the threads, so they do not preserve the beans from being exposed to the external environment. This kind of sack loses quality quickly, once it is sewed, and so needs to be pierced each time a sample is extracted to be evaluated. Polypropylene bags, instead, have two openings: one on the top, where coffee is inserted and from which the samples are taken out; and another on the bottom, through which the product is unloaded. Such system avoids the package to be constantly damaged. Another issue concerning jute is the difficulty to obtain this raw-material. Jute is a vegetable fiber planted in low scale by riverside families from Amazon, and sometimes it does not supply the national demand.

Each day there are new options in the market, such polyethylene plastic bag, hermetically sealed, with low level of oxygen and high level of carbon dioxide, but not in vacuum. This method offers a better cost-benefit relation than the jute sacks and the atmosphere-modified packs.