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illycaffè:

*An Obsession with
Quality and a
Passion for
Sustainability*

- Packaging's Role in Single Serve
- Tea & Chocolate
- Women in Coffee: Part II
- What is Best for Coffee?



niques to adapting agronomic practices to suit different varietals. Attendees also participated in skill building workshops in classes ranging from green coffee grading to comparative cupping.

As a whole, The Event served as a forum for invaluable face-to-face conversation between existing partners and as a space for forming new industry relationships. Producers were able to meet existing buyers for the first time as well as secure new sales, but attendees from outside the

US were also intent on learning about the US's café culture. Jorge Luis Lagos Calix, a producer from Dipilto, Nicaragua, commented, "I'm not here looking for buyers. The main purpose of this trip is because my sister is opening a coffee shop in Estelí, Nicaragua, where she's going to serve coffee from our farms. She wants me to look for equipment and technology."

The Event was also an occasion to celebrate successful collaborations and announce new initiatives. Farmworkers

from Ipanema Agricola in Alfenas, Minas Gerais, Brazil, and Finca La Revancha in La Dalia, Nicaragua, made their first visits to the US in order to speak about the to the US to speak about the successful Fair Trade USA certification of their respective of estates through pilot projects extending new benefits to farmworkers. At the Coffee Quality Institute luncheon, Governor Sergio Fajardo of Colombia's Department of Antioquia spoke about the "Antioquia: Most Educated" initiative he's spearheading to encourage "education as the engine for social transformation" in the most populous and largest coffee producing state of Colombia.

The Event upheld its reputation as being a "forum of firsts," with Ethiopian producers who'd been selling to Starbucks for years making a pilgrimage to Pike's Place Market, while producers and roasters held private cupping sessions where new coffees hit palates for the first time.

In addition to serving as the host, Starbucks sponsored a tour to its facility in Kent, Wash. The "flexible" facility processes whole, ground and soluble (this summer) coffee, as well as tea.

The 2015 27th Annual SCAA Event will also be held in Seattle at the Washington State Convention Center and for the first time, will host the World Barista Championship.—RN

Think Coffee Charts New Territory

Entering one of Think Coffee's five Manhattan café locations seems akin to that of many other Greenwich Village coffee houses. There are tasty pastries and grilled cheese sandwiches for sale, college students clustering around tables covered with open textbooks, and people rushing out the door with lattes in hand.

This type of retail environment is the sole way in which many consumers experience coffee. Though Think's cafés may feel familiar, the back of house logistics and tree-to-cup supply chain structure are far from traditional.

Think Coffee is an outlier among cafés; it sources 100 percent of its green coffee. Think is not a roaster; it toll roasts with several roasters, including Plowshares in Hillburn, New York, Longo Coffee and



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Tea in Brooklyn, New York, and Red House Roasters in Union City, New Jersey.

Think's first location opened in 2006, purchasing 100 percent Fair Trade certified coffee from a single roaster, but green buyer Matt Fury explained that the staff was unsatisfied because, "we couldn't trace the money one way or the coffee the other."

In 2008, Think began to take on an activity few retail cafés pursue: sourcing coffee at origin. Like so many cafés, Think was concerned with quality and environmental stewardship, but it refused to waver on its goal of complete transparency. Think wanted to be able to tell its customers the name of the exact farmer who grew the beans for their lattes as much as it was committed to telling producers the exact fate of the beans they exported.

Even with five busy Manhattan cafés (and later five in Korea); Think's volume was small enough to make importing tricky. The green buying team, headed by Fury, continued to negotiate price and quality and assume all risk, working with various importers, warehouses and roasters purely as service providing partners.

Gabriel "Medio" Davalos, a Think barista studying international trade at NYU, saw the relationships Think had forged with producers and wondered if other retailers or small roasters would like to support a similarly fair and transparent supply chain through collaboration with an equally, ethically-minded importing company focusing on small volumes. In 2011 Davalos founded The Bushwick Seed Company (Buseco), an importing company bringing full containers of green coffee from Ethiopia and Nicaragua to roasters and cafés concerned with full transparency and responsible sourcing of their most crucial raw ingredient.

Today, Buseco is one of several

importers Think uses to execute the logistics of coffee sourcing as a café. The green buying team conducts regular trips to origins from Aceh, Indonesia, to Chiapas, Mexico, and invites staff and customers along for visits that are the finest examples of educational travel. Staying with producing families and participating in tasks from cherry picking to processing, staff and customers experience firsthand the factors that affect the farmer's livelihoods and fla-

vors of the coffee they roast and serve.

Think Coffee is proving that retail focused companies can assume the risk and responsibility, and also reap the rewards of integrity and higher profits, of sourcing independently according to staunch values-based purchasing principles. Think also demonstrates that the café can also be the catalyst for others along the chain to explore new connections with origin, promoting traceable transparency from which everyone can benefit.—RN



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