

History of Coffee in India

Most people in North America think of India as a leading producer of fine teas. Few associate India with top grade Specialty Coffees. Actually, India has been a producer and exporter of exceptional coffees for over 170 years.

India's romance with coffee goes back nearly 400 years. Legend credits a Moslem pilgrim, Baba Budan, with secretly bringing back seven coffee seeds from a pilgrimage to Mecca. He is said to have planted these near his mountain cave in Chikmagalur, Karnataka State, now considered the cradle of Indian coffee.

Commercial cultivation of coffee in India began in 1840 when the British established Arabica coffee plantations throughout the mountains of Southern India. They found the tropical climate, high altitude, sunny slopes, ample rainfall, soil rich in humus content, and well drained sub soil ideal for coffee cultivation. Coffee plantations were extended to lower elevations in India around 1900 with Robusta plants imported from Indonesia.

Coffee Production Today

Today, India is the sixth largest producer of coffee in the world, behind Brazil, Vietnam, Colombia, Indonesia, and Mexico. India produces about 320,000 MT of coffee each year, of which 104,000 MT is Arabica and 216,000 MT is Robusta. Of the three principal coffee growing states, Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, the first two produce most of India's Robusta.

India exports nearly 70 percent of the coffee it produces. These exports consist mainly of high grade beans from both the Arabica and the Robusta growing regions. Italy, importing 50,000 MT each year, is the largest importer of coffees from India, because they perform particularly well in espresso blends.

Indian coffee has always been known as well-balanced coffee with outstanding aroma and exceptional quality in the cup, commanding a

premium on the European market. Thus, much of India's coffee goes to Europe.

Grades of Indian Coffees

As in most producing countries, India processes coffee by the washed (or wet) as well as the natural (or dry) methods. Washed Arabica is known in India as **Plantation Coffee** and washed Robusta as **Parchment Coffee**. Natural processed coffee beans, both Arabica and Robusta, are called Cherry.

Monsooned Coffees

Monsooned coffees are truly one-of-a-kind in that they do not look like or taste like any other coffee from any origin. The bean size, its color, and cup characteristics are the result of a unique post harvest processing these beans undergo in India.

In olden times, coffee was shipped from India to Europe in wooden sailing vessels, taking four to six months to sail around the African continent before reaching their destinations. Coffee, stored below the water line and kept in a humid atmosphere by the little moisture seeping

through the wood, underwent a form of treatment on its long voyage to the market. When that coffee reached Europe, it had changed its color from bright green to pale gold, and had lost its new crop acidity. It was mellow and easy on the stomach. Europeans loved it not realizing at that time how unusual it was.

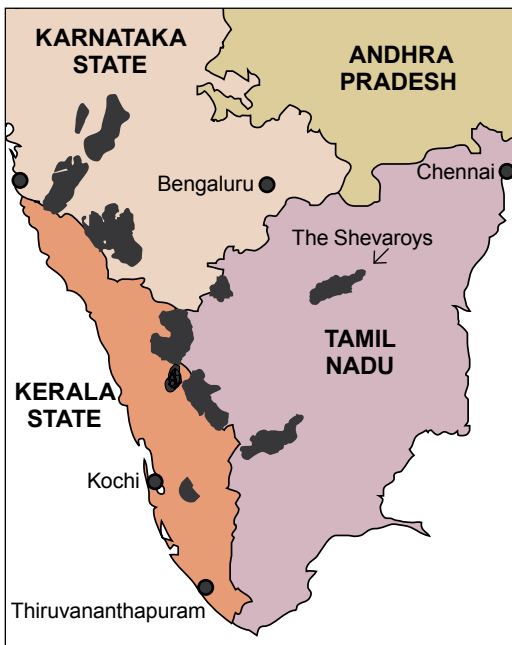
When steel ships started carrying coffee and they steamed through the Suez Canal, sailing time became shorter, coffee stayed dry and green, and it retained its acidity. The monsooning process was later developed in India to restore coffee's then familiar flavor by simulating the *unique treatment* coffee received *en route* to the European ports.

The Monsooning Process

The monsooning process consists of exposing natural processed coffee beans in layers of four- to six-inch thickness to moisture laden monsoon winds in a well ventilated brick- or concrete-floored warehouse. This process is carried out on the coastal regions of Western India making use of winds from the Arabian Sea during the Southwest Monsoon months of June thru September.

One starts with the top grade beans, Robusta Cherry-A, that have already been processed by the dry method. To equalize moisture absorption, the beans are raked frequently, followed by bulking and re-bagging at regular intervals. At the end of the monsoon season, this coffee is re-bulked, graded again, bagged and moved to a drier region for longer term storage.

In this 12-16 week process, these beans absorb moisture in stages, swell to nearly twice their original size, develop color ranging from pale gold to light brown and acquire a special, unique flavor. At this stage, moisture content is 14.5%, up from the 10.5% for regular Indian coffees, and most importantly, it has become one of the lowest acid coffees in the world. In the cup they display lots of body and a very pleasant earthiness. This mellowing is particularly important for Robusta because it completely eliminates the harshness one associates with Robusta beans.



Map of South India showing both Arabica and Robusta Growing Regions

Monsooned Robusta-AA

Monsooned Robusta-AA imported by Josuma Coffee Company is superior to similar coffees carried by other importers and brokers in the US. Its superiority comes from an approach we employ in the processing of these coffees. To insure that we obtain the very best beans, we procure the natural Robusta from large growers who would normally convert them to washed coffees. By paying a higher price, we get fully ripe and uniform beans and these growers get the same benefit as if they had actually produced washed coffee.

Most natural Robusta in India is grown by small farmers who can not provide the labor to pick the beans in more than one round. They simply strip the bushes and dry the ripe, the overripe, the under ripe and the unripe green cherries all together. These small growers also do not have proper drying yards and their coffees are dried on paved public roads, or other areas not suited for drying coffee.

As a result, a 250 bag lot most monsooneders buy from "the trade" is invariably lower grade coffee assembled from many growers, ending with poor monsooned coffee, no matter how well the actual monsooning is done.

Versatile Coffee with Many Uses

Monsooned Robusta-AA is a premium specialty coffee. As a low-acid varietal, it is exceptionally smooth, full bodied with a pleasant earthy flavor, but without even a hint of mustiness or mildew taste of an aged coffee. It is very easy on the stomach.

Blending for espresso is probably the most important use of this mellow Robusta coffee. Because of its soft cup characteristics, it can blend with a broader spectrum of low acid, natural Arabica base coffees in an espresso blend than some of the other Robusta beans. In our experience, these Robusta do not necessarily produce more crema, but it definitely makes the crema last a lot longer.

Josuma Coffee Company

Josuma Coffee Company imports fine specialty coffees exclusively from India for distribution to brokers, wholesale roasters, and roaster/retailers in the United States and Canada.

Josuma Coffee Company, located in the San Francisco Bay Area, was formed in 1992 to function as a knowledgeable importer of Indian coffees and to act as an effective liaison between the producers in India and the Specialty Coffee market in North America.

All the coffees we import are the result of "direct trade," buying them directly from the estates where they are grown, picked, and processed to meet Josuma's exacting standards. We do not buy any of these coffees from the trade in India. By eliminating several layers of intermediaries, we are able to pass on those savings to you.

This coffee is available thru:

Imported by:

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MONSOONED ROBUSTA-AA

*a
uniquely
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low-acid
specialty
robusta
from*

India