

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 160 years. Today, India is the fifth largest producer of Arabica coffee in the world, behind Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Ethiopia.

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 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 Production Today

India produces both Arabica and Robusta coffee beans in roughly equal quantities. Out of about 200,000 tons of coffee produced each year, India exports nearly 60 percent. These exports consist mainly of high grade beans from both the Arabica and the Robusta growing regions. 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.

Grades of Indian Coffees

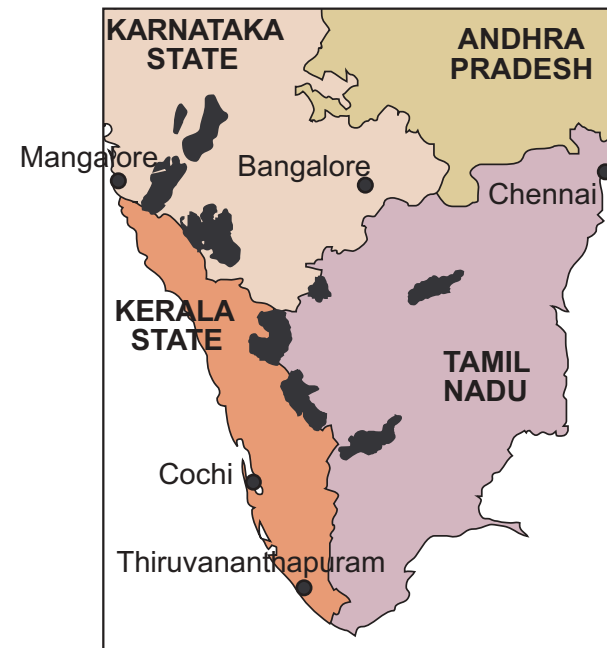
As in most producing countries, India processes coffee by the washed (or wet) as well as the natural (or dry) methods. Washed Arabica is known in India as **Plantation Coffee** and washed Robusta as **Parchment Coffee**. Natural processed coffee beans, both Arabica and Robusta, are called **Cherry**.

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 Cape of Good Hope 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 in the cup and easy on the stomach. Europeans loved this coffee 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



Map of South India showing the principal Arabica growing regions

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, Arabica 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 the lowest acid coffee in the world. In the cup they display lots of body and a very pleasant earthiness.

Monsooned Malabar-AA, Super Grade

Monsooned Malabar imported by Josuma Coffee Company is superior to similar coffees carried by other importers and brokers in the US; **this "Super Grade" coffee is exclusive to Josuma**. Its superiority comes from two approaches we employ in the processing of these coffees.

First, to insure that we obtain the very best beans, we procure the natural Arabica 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. If the natural Arabica were purchased from the large growers without paying a premium, one would receive the greens and yellows rejected from each day's pick as well as the "floats" and "lights" from the washing process.

Most natural Arabica 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 and the 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 monsooners 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.

Secondly, working with the people who custom monsoon coffees for Josuma, we have found a way to segregate the beans that are fully Monsooned from those that are only partially monsooned. Since the monsooning process can go on only as long as the monsoon rains last, many of the beans are only partially Monsooned. We segregate the fully monsooned beans for the "Super Grade" leaving the partially Monsooned beans to make up the bulk of the regular Monsooned Malabar-AA grade.

Versatile Coffee with Many Uses

Monsooned Malabar-AA Super Grade 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 is an important use of this mellow coffee to cut down the acidity of some unusually sharp African or Central American coffees. **As**

a neutral base in an espresso blend is probably its best use; providing the desirable body, excellent crema, and its mild character not interfering with the flavor profile of the featured coffee in the blend.

Monsooned Malabar-AA Super Grade is a good alternative for decaffeinated coffee in those cases where regular coffee affects one's stomach, and as a result, keeps one awake at night. They can switch to **Monsooned Malabar-AA Super Grade** which is gentler on the stomach and continue to enjoy the benefits of caffeine and the taste of regular coffee.

This coffee is a stylish roaster and takes on a bright chocolate color early in its development with little darkening until it almost begins to burn.

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.

This coffee is available thru:

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JOSUMA
COFFEE COMPANY

MONSOONED MALABAR-AA SUPER GRADE

*a
uniquely
processed,
low-acid
specialty
coffee from
India*