

Coffee The Columbian Way

If you're a coffee drinker you have heard of, and probably tried, a cup of Columbian. Bland, sometimes adequate, and sold everywhere. But that's predominately coffee shop or grocery store coffee. Would you criticize the fine food of a four star restaurant by comparing it to a cheap diner before you've tasted both?

Like any major producer, Columbia does generate a lot of average beans. If you're willing to look a little deeper within that huge output you will find some great gems.

By contrast to Brazil, which dry-processes most of its coffee berries, almost all Columbian coffee is washed, which helps carry away impurities. Done properly, it can still produce a flavorful, robust cup.

Soaked in cold water for 24 hours, the soaking initiates fermentation, which aids in producing a great aroma. The beans are then washed in order to remove twigs, dirt and an outer layer of unpleasant material.

During the process, unacceptable beans are selected and discarded. The beans are then dried on large open-air terraces and rotated frequently to provide even drying. The result is a lower acid, smoother cup.

This has been going on since the early 1800s when coffee was first introduced into the country. Today, Columbia is one of the largest producers in the world, providing 12% of the total. The central region, along with Bogota and Bucaramanga in the eastern mountains produce almost the entire amount.

While much of that is simply ordinary, grocery store quality, the finest blends are the equal of any coffee anywhere. The product from Buraramanga is heavy bodied, while coffee from Bogota is rich and low in acid.

Supremo from the state of Narino is another fine example of Columbian. Providing an excellent cup when lightly roasted, it's perfect for a late afternoon drink when you want a rich cup, but don't want to be overwhelmed with acid and caffeine.

A line of 'Triple Seal' organic coffees from Columbia are becoming ever more popular. Shaded Santos from eastern Columbia, gives a smooth, mellow cup of coffee. Open a bag and you instantly smell a rich coffee aroma.

Though the actor who has portrayed 'Juan Valdez' for years in countless commercials is retiring, you can rest assured that Columbian coffee will still be offering some of the finest coffees anywhere.