

Coffee

THE NEWSLETTER
OF VIRMAX CAFÉ



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FACES

WELCOME to the early summer edition of Coffee Faces. Since our last edition many things have happened, among others: the market increased its volatility due to weather concerns in Brazil, as well as speculation; and the Colombian Mitaca crop, which was widely anticipated, has only just begun to arrive, also due to weather considerations.

Unfortunately for us, heavier rainfall than normal has delayed the start of the fly-crop in Colombia. As some of you may know, coffee cherries take longer to ripen and any picked coffee cherries take longer to sundry when there is extra rain. However, the little coffee we have seen so far is of good quality and we expect that over the next thirty to forty-five days, volumes will start to increase and we will finally be able to get up to speed with shipments. Apologies to all our clients that have had to wait, but unfortunately we cannot bargain with Mother Nature!

Fortunately, for the past two months we have been busy with many activities in many fronts. We would like to mention our participation as observers for the El Salvador Cup of Excellence®, for which we would like to extend a big thank you to the Consejo Salvadoreño del Café and ACE. We at Virmax are convinced that such events are a great opportunity for small coffee farmers to gain recognition for their work. And for a country such as Colombia, which has plenty of unexploited potential, it would be the ideal event to establish the country as a force in the Specialty coffee sector.

As we have always said it, as a country Colombia has got the potential to produce almost unlimited cup profiles, having eighteen coffee growing regions and a wide variety of soils and weather conditions. However, most of these coffees have been undiscovered.

Perhaps one of the hardest – and at the same time most rewarding part of our job, is doing just that: discovering the hidden gems of Colombia's coffee growers. And this is a search that can never stop. Coffee is an evolving product and is fascinating how it is always possible to find something new: flavors, aromas, complex mixes that you would never thought possible. So it is all about discovery!

And with discovery come two intertwined processes: relationship building and learning. By developing direct relationships, there is an exchange of ideas between roasters and coffee growers that



<http://www.gobernatornino.gov.co/foces.htm>

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lead to constant improvement and new discoveries, building a beneficial cycle.

After many years roasters have started flying again to Colombia to meet the growers that produce their coffee. These sorts of trips strengthen the business relationship, as both growers and roasters are able to put a face on the business and develop a personal bond with their counterpart. And then is when the ideas exchange starts and the discovery process really gets a boost.

The term Direct Relationships Coffees is much more than a marketing gimmick. It is a reality and we are lucky to contribute to its development.

In this edition of Coffee Faces you will find information on our new origin – Tolima, and some of the exciting coffee we are developing there. In addition, we will talk about our coffee logos and bags and how they come to life. And finally; Coffee Drops. We hope you enjoy it!!!

Please send comments or questions to info@virmax.com ☪

Our New Origin: Tolima

SOME OF YOU HAVE STARTED to receive samples from three new coffees grown in the South of the department of Tolima. These three unique and new coffees, El Jordan, El Macizo and Casa Verde, are produced by three different coffee grower co-operatives. The first two are coffee grower co-operatives from the municipality of Planadas and the last from the municipality of Ataco.

We have been working with these three co-ops since October 2003, with the help of the Comité Departamental de Cafeteros del Tolima.

Brand Name:	El Jordan	El Macizo	Casa Verde
Origin:	Planadas	Planadas	Ataco
Producers:	Asociación de Productores de Café del Jordán	Asociación de Caficultores del Macizo del Tolima	Asociación de Productores de Casa Verde - Ataco
No. of Coffee Growers:	288	88	152
Altitude:	1450-1800	1300-1700	1500-1800
Variety:	Caturra, Colombia and some Typica	Caturra, Colombia and some Typica	Caturra, Colombia and some Typica
Shade:	Partial shade (plantain, cedar and nogal)		
Drying Method:	Fully sun-dried		
Fertilization:	Chemical & Organic		
Annual Production (70 kg bags):	1,500	750	750
Harvests:	Main crop: April - July		
Fly-crop:	October-December		
Cup Profile:	Nice fruit and chocolate notes on the fragrance, bright lemon-like acidity and a velvety chocolate body with a nice cereal finish	Aromatic and citric notes, medium-to-high orange-like acidity, with a delicate and long aftertaste.	Lemon notes on the fragrance complement a bright acid cup that finishes with a sweet and sour taste on the palate.

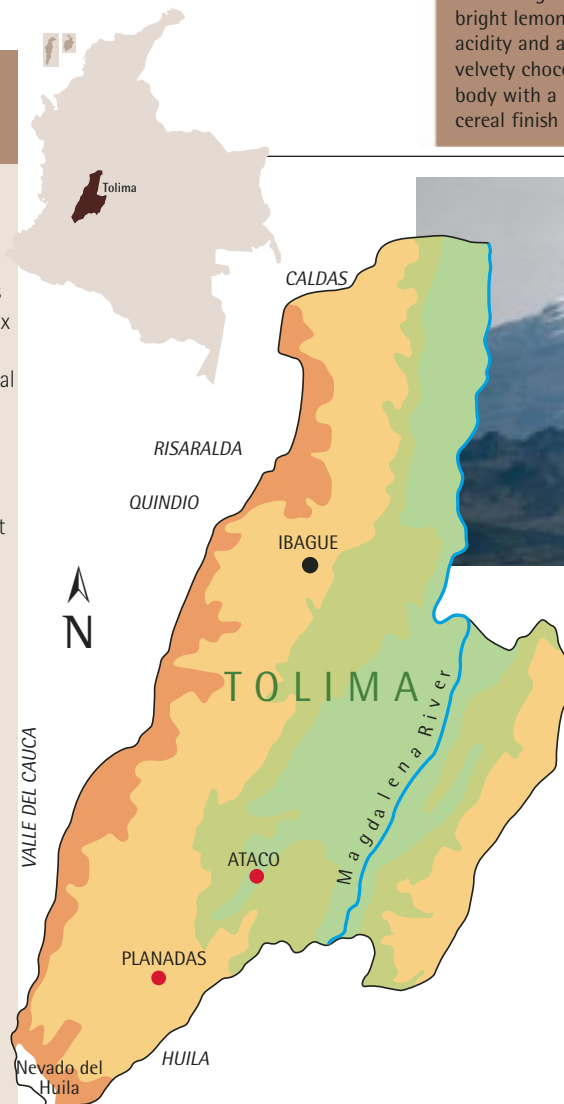
Coffee FACES

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"Nevado del Huila. (Courtesy: INGEOMINAS)"

The department of Tolima is the third largest coffee producer in Colombia. Coffee from the South of Tolima has a very different cup profile than most other Colombian coffees. Its closeness to the Nevado del Huila, one of Colombia's most beautiful snow capped volcanoes, gives its soil rich nutrients and confer this region a microclimate of its own. Thanks to this, you will find coffees with high acidity and a strong, silky body.

We have already sent some samples of these three coffees to some of our clients with the hope that they will see the potential underlying these coffees. ☺

How we define the face of each coffee?

AS MANY OF YOU HAVE NOTICED, each one of our coffees has a specific logo, which acts as the "face" of the brand name. The brand name is co-owned between the coffee growers and Virmax, since after all we play on the same team.

The process behind each logo is not a simple one, and they have been chosen carefully.

The process is divided into four separate stages:

1. CHOOSING THE NAME OF THE COFFEE. For this process we normally take into account the history of the region and of the coffee growers themselves. In general there is an input process from the growers and ourselves until we can come to an agreement, and then a proposal is put forward to a general assembly of the coffee growers, who choose the one they like best.



2. DESIGNING THE LOGO. Taking into account the name chosen, as well as the background of the region, a designer is chosen for the logo. Virmax does a first revision of the proposed logos, reducing the options and then presenting them to the coffee growers, who once again decide democratically on the one they prefer.

A drawer scales the logo to the size of the bags.

3. PREPARATION OF MARKETING MATERIAL. Once the design is complete, we proceed to elaborate the info brochure for the coffee, as well as the coffee bags.



Printing is done using a technique called "screen". Each color requires its own screen and printing is done one color at a time.

4. PRINTING OF THE COFFEE BAGS. Once a first shipment for the coffee has been scheduled, the jute bags are sent to Envigado, near Medellin. There, a small company called Screen hand paints each bag using vegetable tints. Every bag is unique – a work of art.

We believe that a higher quality product should be packed in a higher quality and better-looking package. This is why we use thicker coffee bags and we spend the time and money necessary to print the coffee brand name and logo on each coffee bag, making sure that whoever sees the bag, will remember it, and know that inside it he or she will find a unique product. ☺



The finished product

Coffee drops

- Unfortunately, Virmax FC was eliminated from the competition at the semi-final stage after a grueling duel with Gimnasio BHB – the eventual champions of the tournament. We would like to thank all our players for their effort and commitment, as well as remind them that there is a still a second semester championship to chase. Better luck in the next stage.
- Javier Muñoz, who has been working in our accounting department since December 2003, has joined our cupping training programme. So far, he has shown great potential and we expect him to fully join our quality control department gradually as his training progresses.
- As previously mentioned the Mitaca crop has been delayed due to weather factors. However we expect to be able to comply with all our contracted shipments albeit a little bit later than expected. We apologize once again for this, but we rather wait and ship excellent coffee instead of trying to hurry things up. We believe your deliveries will be worth the extra wait!!