

Coffee

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF VIRMAX CAFÉ



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FACES

OCTOBER HAS ARRIVED and once again another coffee year is about to begin. For the majority of Colombia's coffee growers (and customers) October also marks the start of a new harvest. So we have decided to dedicate this edition of Coffee Faces to the start of the 2003/2004 harvest and give you head start of what coffees we will have an offer!!

We have many reasons to believe that this new harvest will be one of the best harvests in many years:

First, and perhaps most importantly of all, we are beginning to see a good amount of optimism from coffee growers. The sales achieved during our first year at prices that have allowed them to cover their costs and gradually improve their quality of life. We hope that this optimism can be maintained thanks to the continued support from our clients.

Second, due to a relatively small *mitaca* harvest (fly-crop), good climatic conditions and extra dedication of the coffee growers in their fields, the coffee trees are full of beans. If all goes well, this will probably mean that we will have a good amount of top-notch coffee available for our clients.

Third, the educational campaigns that we have implemented during the past twelve months have begun to show results. Coffee growers are ever more aware of the importance of improving their *beneficio* techniques and pre-selection process. Slowly, the growers are improving and homogenizing their

processes, leading to improvements in quality and consistency.

Fourth, we have established new partnerships with new top-quality growers, both co-ops and estates. We believe you will find them as good as we think they are.

Last but not least, we would like to thank all our clients for their support over the last twelve months. By buying our coffees at prices that at least allow our suppliers to cover their costs and make a decent living, you have brought joy and hope to hundreds of *cafeteros*. Best of all, you have filled with enthusiasm more coffee growers to produce more top quality coffee. This ultimately means that thanks to your support coffee growers and their communities will be able to enjoy a better future. ☺

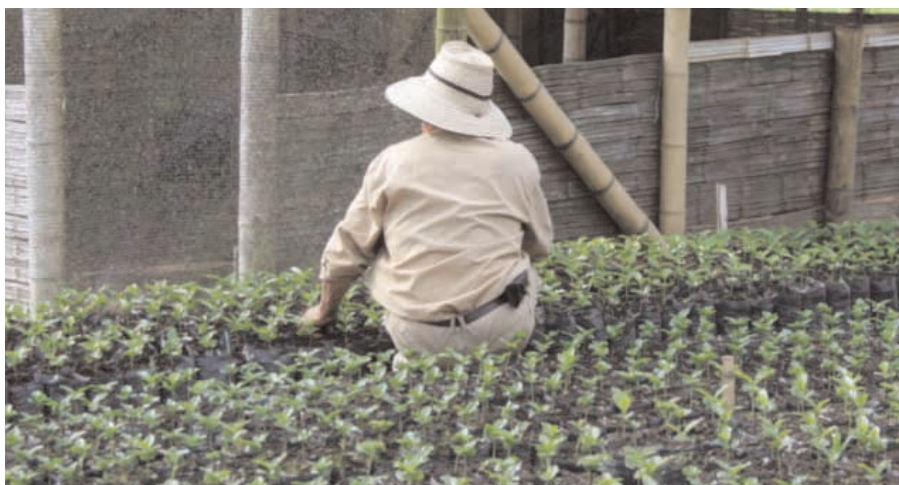


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WHAT MAKES VIRMAX DIFFERENT FROM OTHER COLOMBIAN EXPORTERS




VIRMAX has a completely different approach to the coffee business. We believe in high quality, in transparency and in making coffee growers participants of the whole process.

In order to guarantee traceability, we only work with co-operatives or estates. Parchment coffee is purchased once a lot has been contracted for a specific shipment; therefore we do not carry inventories of parchment coffee. This assures customers that the coffee being purchased has been grown, selected, milled and prepared exclusively for him, and

that the people involved (from the growers to the customs agents) are aware of the importance of each shipment, being attentive to all the details related with it.

Transparency is the corner stone of the Relationship Coffee model. All our coffees are developed within the frame of this model, whether or not the customer is actually developing a Relationship Programme or not. Therefore, we give all coffee growers the same opportunity to explore the international market and to receive a higher price for their product within a transparent framework.

Finally, but equally important, is quality. There would be no coffee business, much less specialty coffee, if quality were not its main component. We believe that you do not sell specialty coffees, you market them. But the specialty sector is not based on a pretty packaging and a lovely story. These are mere accessories. What really counts is the quality and unique cup characteristics of the coffee inside the bag.

To guarantee an excellent quality, we have implemented very strict quality controls that start at the farms of coffee growers and end at the shipping port. We test each bag of parchment coffee purchased to ensure there are no cup defects, it has a minimum number of physical defects and is consistent with the cup profile. Finally, we perform a comprehensive analysis of the resulting green coffee, which is complemented at port. 

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Coffee FACES

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OUR COFFEES

COFFEE GROWERS from the south of the country, mainly Huila, Cauca, Nariño, Tolima and from the Sierra Nevada have been working very hard during the last six months to improve the quality of their coffee, looking to take part in the Relationship Coffee Programme. The growers have seen the benefits the programme has delivered to other coffee co-ops and want to emulate them.

We believe that during the upcoming new crop we will have access to the best Colombia can offer. And we are willing to put our money where our mouth is. We want to show our current customers and our potential new customers that it IS possible to get excellent Colombian coffee.

We know that all of you want to provide your customers with the best available. So why not take the chance and see for yourself the difference that purchasing coffee directly from coffee growers can make. We are extremely flexible and are able to accommodate your needs. Give us a call and request samples; we are confident you will notice the difference. ☺

Name	Origin	Preparation	Potential Availability (70 kg bags '03-'04)
Relationship Coffees			
La Cacica	Huila	EP	500
Los Guácharos	Huila	EP	1,500
Quebradón	Huila	EP	200
Timaná	Huila	EP	1,500
El Vegón ^{NEW}	Huila	EP	750
De la Plata ^{NEW}	Huila	EP	500
De la Unión	Nariño	EP	1,000
Estate Coffees			
Bohemio	Sierra Nevada	EP	750
Bohemio (Organic) ^{1 NEW}	Sierra Nevada	UGQ, EP	250
La Rochela (Organic) ^{1 NEW}	Valle del Cauca	UGQ, EP	3,000
Traceable Excelsos ^{NEW}			
Huila Co-ops Select Excelso	Huila	UGQ, EP, Extra	12,000
Huila Co-ops Select Supremo	Huila	Supremo (Sc. 17+)	5,000
Huila Co-ops Select Premium	Huila	Premium (Sc. 18+)	2,500

¹ OCIA, JAS and Ecocert Organic Certification

THE 2003/2004 CROP: WHAT TO EXPECT

DURING THE PAST six months we have made great efforts to find new coffees. Thanks to the success of our first five Relationship Coffees, new co-ops have approached us, eager to join the Programme. Therefore we now have a wider portfolio of Relationship Coffees to offer.

Additionally, we have been working with several organic coffee growers to launch our first organic coffees. The fruit of this effort is three different organic coffees from three completely different regions of the country: Valle del Cauca, the Sierra Nevada and Santander. The first two are also estate coffees.

We have also strengthened our relationship with different Cooperatives and are now able to offer our clients good quality excelsos and supremos at competitive prices, with full traceability. ☺

END MESSAGE

VIRMAX, together with several groups of hard working Colombian coffee growers, represents a new way of working in the Colombian coffee industry; a new way of doing business.

The only way we can continue to motivate coffee growers to do a good job, and produce the best coffee they can, is by actually giving them a chance to prove it, while generating a financial incentive for sustainability. Only if coffee growers get paid at least their production costs plus a decent margin, we can continue to look forward to another new crop.

Volumes of high quality new crop coffees will be limited. We do not want to handle millions of bags of mediocre qual-

ity; only the best available. So if you want to get your hands on probably the best Colombian coffees you will ever try, contact us and try our portfolio of Relationship Coffees. You will not regret it and your customers will come back looking for more. ☺

If you are interested in receiving samples or further information on any of our coffees, please contact us at +57(1) 623 7971 (Bogotá) or +44(0)20 7939 9955 (London).
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