



Dinah Select

Nyeri County, Kenya

Partner since: 2017

Traceable to: Traceable through Nairobi Coffee Auction

Altitude: 1750 - 2000

Varietals: SL 28, SL 34, K7, Ruiru 11

Processing: Kenya holds the gold standard when it comes to coffee processing. 100% of the coffee is washed, well, except 'buna' which refers to 'seconds', naturals which have grown overripe on the tree or which have otherwise fallen near the end of harvest. But all washed coffee picked, floated, and separated by washing channel into three grades of parchment by density (P1, P2, and P3). Parchment is skin-dried on raised beds, then spread out to dry over a 10 – 18 day period (weather, altitude depending). At the mill, parchment is separated again, by both grade and outturn (the % of coffee which has to be removed during milling, normally defects or small-sized beans).

Harvest: October November December

Booking: March April May

Arrivals: May June July



This is a 'best of auction' blend that relies more on calibration with a cupping team than work on the farm. QC labs in Kenya cup through hundreds (and hundreds) of coffees each day. They have to. Each week another cohort of coffees come to auction in lots ranging from 2 to 200 bags, and they must rate each one. Rating systems generally range from 1-5, with a few words noting general profile or what client might be interested in a coffee like this.

Dinah is the Queen Cupper at Taylor Winch Coffee, a Kenyan-based exporter that buys solely from the auction. Unlike other exporters, TWT is unaffiliated with marketing agents so it is a neutral party through which we can consolidate coffees from across supply-chains. But that's not all. Over the years Dinah has identified some incredible coffees that are right to our preference. Namely juicy body, complex residual sugars, and berry or tropical fruit acidity (over savory tomato or traditional currant).

Given these parameters Dinah can cup across every coffee that comes to auction and set aside lots she thinks we'll like. It's an unfair advantage in an incredibly competitive and time-sensitive sourcing environment. But trust and calibration, plus Dinah's exposure and experience, give us the confidence to book aggressively- grabbing the best of each week's auction lots and then blending to taste.



Kenya is an enigma. It occupies a top spot in specialty – Kenyan top lots are always amongst the most expensive of any harvest. But yet it's a country where coffee production is dropping year over year. Kenya is a place where traceability is given, but knowing what you want and how to get it are two different things. Rarely do we find partners more capable, and loyalties more difficult to navigate than we do in Kenya. For all the aforementioned reasons, competition in Kenya is fierce, making prized coffees feel like even more of a success.

However, no matter how formally the industry is structured, coffee still remains a system of people. And in a country where farmers own their own cherry production, there is additional power to connecting with coffee's most important stakeholder. Farmers can, for example, point you to the best collections from every harvest, or delay sending their lots to auction to give you another week to sample. At request they can change the way they separate lots, bringing new products to market in a year that would take other countries nearly a decade to do.

But experimentation is not the name of the game. With washed coffees working so well, you won't find many a manager willing to mess around with different fermentations, flotation, drying times or with certifications like organic.

The experiment instead is that of business model. How do cooperatives normalize earnings to keep their members engaged in coffee? How do we take away red tape to encourage more farmers to plant more coffee, as opposed to corn or dairy? How can small estates split off and succeed under their own pulping license? Is it better to sell through auction or directly to an international buyer – can you afford to cut out your marketing agent? Once you speak to these problems you are speaking the language of coffee in Kenya – this is a country that already knows how to coffee.