



Gil Cesar de Melo, Espigão do Palmital

**Cerrado Mineiro,
Campos Altos, Brazil**

Partner since: 2018

Varietals: Mundo Novo,
Catigua, Catucaí

Traceable to: Single Farm

Processing: Natural processed;
cherries are floated then dried
7-10 days on patio, until 15-16%
moisture, supported by
mechanical dryers if needed
down to 11.5% before resting in
warehouse.

Altitude: 950 - 1130 MASL

Harvest: July August September

Booking: November December

Arrivals: January February



The story of Gil César de Melo mixes tradition with passion and daring. The story takes place near Campos Altos, the deep interior of Minas Gerais. And it starts with Gil's grandfather, Miguel

Constante, who had a daughter, Elizena Sebastiana de Melo, who married João Rafael de Melo and had a son, Gil César de Melo.

As a boy Gil spent weekends and vacations with his grandfather on the farm; at that time coffee was transported by ox cart. Growing up, Gil took an office job, then another in fertilizer sales.

He married, had children, and looked for an opportunity to get back to coffee. His day came when his cousin, a farmer, invited him to be a partner in a coffee endeavor. Together they planted the first 6 hectares that they grew into 22 hectares. When prices dropped to \$ 33 a bag Gil's cousin gave up; Gil Caesar decided to buy his cousin's share and run the farm on his own.

Since then, Gil has grown the farm to 138 hectares of coffee plantations in a prime location in Campos Altos. The farm is separated by tree varietal, age and micro-climate. Proceeds are invested back into the farm, into a local school, and into an experimental plot with 17 new varietals solely for research.



Brazil is to other coffee-growing countries as Jupiter is to other planets – huge, and deserving a category of its own. But despite its size, we don't look to Brazil as a source of specialty; we were once told that asking for a sample of SSFC 17/18 is like asking for a sample of a 'big mac'.

This, however, is an old view from an older generation. We now have a younger crop of farmers entering the specialty scene – this generation was raised with the Internet, knows 21st-century coffee, and are excited to find out what's possible for their family's farm.

But it's a struggle to convince parents that this new approach is not just youthful fantasy – with one approach working so well for so long, it's hard to take specialty seriously. This battle seems to be happening inside households across Brazil, as city-dwelling, college-educated sons and daughters return to the family farm to help their baby-boomer parents prepare for retirement.

Despite this tension, wherever we look we see small successes building a case for specialty, one win at a time. It could be glowing feedback, a good yield, a high price or even just the smallest recognition by someone outside the family. And the case is growing especially strong in the area around Sao Gortado where we find Yuki Minami and Aequitas coffee educating farmers on what they have and what it's worth. Here we find farmers in their 20s and 30s standing on the shoulders of

giants; they are looking near into the future, and see specialty where we in the US have not yet.