



JKT Itende Youth Service Camp

Mbeya, Tanzania

Partner since: 2023

Traceable to: 6 Month Youth Program

Altitude:

Varietals: Bourbon, Kent, N39

Processing: Cherries are harvested by block, floated and soaked overnight then pulped the next morning before being washed, floated again through channels, and dried on patio over 7-12 days with shade nets used midday.

Harvest: July August September November December January

Booking: October November December February March April

Arrivals: February March April May June



Community Context

JKT stands for Jeshi la Kujenga, the Swahili name for the Tanzanian National Youth Service, a division of the national Army. The program is traced back to the TANU Youth League, formed at the country's founding, and put into practice by 1967 with programs to train and aid youth in areas of employment, justice, environment, disaster response and agriculture. Itende is one of their youth camps, one where they harvest and process coffee. This means that those staffing station are disadvantaged youths aged 13 – 23 who have volunteered to move to camp Itende for six months, in this case, to learn about coffee. Some graduate into other fields, some in those adjacent to the skills they learned here, and some stay in coffee to create a career. The Tanzanian Coffee Research Institute donated seedlings some years back, and now the area under direct cultivation is the equivalent of a sizeable estate.



Country Context

Oral tradition dates the origins of Tanzanian coffee to the 16th century, when the Haya people brought coffee—almost certainly robusta—from Ethiopia into the country. German colonial rule of the country led to its establishment and expansion of coffee cultivation as a commercial industry, with the government in 1911 mandating the planting of Arabica in the northern region of Bukoba, around Lake Victoria. By then, Arabica coffee had grown around Kilimanjaro since 1835 when German colonizers brought coffee to Kaleme Church.

In 2018, the Tanzanian government changed the country's export regulations, moving the formerly centralized coffee auction system to a decentralized, regional model and making it so that private buyers and exporters could no longer purchase cherry or parchment coffee from individual farmers. This left estates and Agricultural Marketing Co-operative Societies—or AMCOS—as the sole channel for purchasing cherry or parchment from growers and processing it for export through regional auctions.

As smallholders—who produce 90+% of Tanzania’s coffee—organized into AMCOS, it created pathways for coffee growers to revitalize their farms and the country’s coffee exports. AMCOS are structured to be lean to allow any pricing premiums to pass to members directly rather than to administrators or other cost centers common to cooperatives in other countries.

Wet mills are expensive and cooperatives compete based on their efficiency—so without incentive to process centrally, most groups deal exclusively in parchment which has been washed and dried at a farmers’ home; aka Home Processed (HP). Almost all smallholder coffee grown on Kilimanjaro is collected as HP parchment, in contrast to groups in the South who have a longer tradition of working in cherry, which allows for centralized processing, and all of the control that this brings to fermentation, drying and storage.

Smallholder coffee from Kilimanjaro, specifically, used to account for over half of Tanzania’s Arabica; by 2020 it was less than one-fifth. Old trees, aging farmers, and low premiums contributed to this decline—as did regulations supporting the growth of estates. In response, the European Union funded, with the support of the local coffee community, a revitalization effort—the Kilimanjaro Smallholder Revival Project—aimed at engaging the next generation of smallholders on Kilimanjaro, and in doing so, preserving the practices, cultivars and profiles that first made Tanzanian coffee renowned.

In the South, we work primarily in Mbeya and Mbinga, both within two days’ drive from the capital and port city of Dar es Salaam. In the early 2000’s, began noticing the variety of flavors coming out of the South. Compared to the North, where volumes were, before the emergence of new AMCOS and the KSPR, dominated by large estates, the South is home to diverse terroirs and profiles. Over the next two decades this interest encouraged the growth of AMCOSs and exporter activity, increasing both quality and production.