



Komothai FCS – Kanake Wet mill

Kiambu County, Kenya

Partner since: 2015

Traceable to: Kanake Wet Mill

Altitude: 1900 MASL

Varietals: SL 34, SL 28 (90%),
Batian, Ruiru 11

Processing: Fully Washed,
24-36 hour ferment, no soak,
dried on raised beds for 14-20
days

Harvest: October November December

Booking: March April May

Arrivals: May June July



On the upper elevations of the Aberdare Range in Kiambu county is where you'll find the Kanake Wet Mill. it's truly picturesque – nestled in between small tea farms and low-laying clouds. The high elevation– 2100+ MASL– creates a cool, and often high-humidity environment, ideal for drying coffee slowly – preserving all the organic materials necessary for a bright, juicy cup.

The Kanake Factory is part of a larger Cooperative (Komothai), which manages 12 processing facilities / factories. This scale can be a definite advantage. For example, Komothai has its own dry mill and processed this year's crop of Kanake coffee themselves. Lot separation and specialty milling requests are easily handled, and the coop maintains more of the value of the coffee by keeping the milling in-house. In addition Komothai is building a cupping lab, to host buyers and to further their knowledge of the coffees they produce. Wilson is the long-time Chairman (serving several terms) and shows all the signs of a motivated leader, including shrewd negotiation ?



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.