



Mukuyuni FCS

**Eastern Province,
Machakos County,
Kenya**

Partner since: 2019

Traceable to: 932 Members

Altitude: 1700 - 2000 MASL

Varietals: SL 28

Processing: Cherries are floated, pulped, wet fermented 12-24 hours, fully washed, and then dried on raised beds

Harvest: October November December

Booking: March April May

Arrivals: May June July



Mukuyuni means 'fig tree' in the Kamba Tribe. The oldest tree in the area was a fig tree, making this the 'place of the fig tree', and figs still are a feature in the area. This is NOT the Central Highlands, but the ocean-facing Eastern Provinces where you will find different profiles, different organizations, and – unfortunately – lower prices at auction. For these reasons this small 1000 member cooperative, which produces less than 3 containers a year, is both UTZ and FT certified. They are progressive, promoting organic techniques, providing transportation to members, and with a policy that at least

half of their 10 member board must be female – when women making up less than 38% of membership in 2019. This board was recognized as the ‘best managed society with high production’ during the 2018 Ushirika celebrations, the same year it got the ‘best in rate payment to members’ award by miller and marketer Tropical Farm Management. Their office is clean. Their store room is clean. So are their washing channels, farms and records. It’s clear this group takes pride– pride you can see when visiting one of their pristine demonstration plots where they teach about crop diversification, organic farming, honey, cattle and poultry. The future of coffee in Kenya will come from outside of the Central Highlands; hopefully from groups like Mukuyuni.



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.