



Mutitu Wet Mill (Rugi FCS)

Murang'a County, Kenya

Partner since: 2019

Traceable to: 750 Smallholders

Altitude: 1600- 1700 MASL

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

Processing: Disc pulped, dry
fermented 12-24 hours, fully
Washed, 36 hr soak, dried on
raised beds

Harvest: October November December

Booking: March April May

Arrivals: May June July



Mutitu wet mill was founded in 1957 near the town of Mukerweini in Nyeri County, making it amongst the oldest operating factories in Kenya. Today Mutitu is a member of the Rugi Farmers Cooperative Society since its founding in 2005. Nearly 750 farmers deliver to the Mutitu wet mill, where cherry is pulped using a disc pulper and put immediately out for 12 – 24 hours of dry fermentation. Coffee is then washed, graded, and soaked for 36 hours – with water being refreshed every 5-12 hours – before being dried for 15 – 20 days on raised beds. Terrain here is lifted to the west by the Aberdares mountain range, which contributes altitude, red volcanic soil and considerable rainfall (~ 1400 mm /

year). The group's collection zone borders Wajee Nature Park, a bird conservancy with over 10 hectares of unspoilt natural forest. The Wajee Nature Park is home to 126 local species of birds, plus species only known here such as the Hinder's Babbler and Side-Striped Jackal. Coffee has intentionally been cultivated around the edges of the park as a buffer, and because of the healthy relationship between the birds and trees.



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.