



Ndimani

Nyeri, Kenya

Partner since: 2017

Traceable to: 1500 Members

Altitude: 1585 - 1700 MASL

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

Processing: Sorted, pulped,
wet fermented 12-24 hours, fully
washed, skin dried then dried on
raised beds.

Harvest: October November December

Booking: March April May

Arrivals: May June July

Community Context

Ndimaini FCS is based in Nyeri County, on the southernmost foothills of Mt. Kenya. This is Karatina District, near the town of Mathira, in case you were looking for where this coffee was collected, processed and milled. In 2014 members of Ndimaini were cheated by a marketing agent who took possession of their coffee, but never delivered on the sale. Since then the group has switched agents and rebuilt their leadership. Now, Simon (Chairman), Josephine (V. Chairwoman), Esther (Cherry Secretary) and Benson (Treasurer) are working hard for their members, and to prove that quality pays. Join us in rooting for this co-op and help us fulfill this promise.

When you ask a supplier for receipts and they point you to a special software they use for cherry collection, you get a good feeling for their level of sophistication. And to be sure, organizational capacity is paramount when that Cooperative manages 1,500 active members across two factories. So it should be no surprise that this group was able to experiment with us. Uniquely, Ndimani's coffee undergoes an hour-long pre-ferment, followed by 16-18 hours of traditional fermentation, then 1-2 hours on drying tables before being washed and dried. This 1-2 hours of drying time is called 'skin drying'; the heat helps to arrest fermentation. Unlike most, Ndimani chooses not to soak parchment – which may be why we found such punchy currant and blue fruit notes in their coffees.

Country Context

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.