



Roi Farms

Kiambu, Kenya

Partner since: 2017

Traceable to: Single Estate

Altitude: 1915

Varietals: SL 28

Processing: Pulped then fermented in water for 1-2 days; washed, sorted and then dried on raised beds for 14+ days

Harvest: October November December

Booking: March April May

Arrivals: May June July



We met Peter via the cupping table at Kofinaf in 2017, where his coffee jumped off the table. It was the best lot we tasted that week, getting the better of hundreds of other factories and small estates that we cupped across multiple agents and exporters. The next year, Peter met us at the airport in Nairobi, ready to show us where his coffee comes from. Peter is an accountant by trade and took up the family coffee business (along with his brother, also named Peter) as the most saavy

businessman amongst his siblings. On the drive, it immediately became clear why Roi farm is so special. Peter drove us up winding slopes of the Aberdare range past 1900 meters. His ancestral land sits at a peak, and is made up of old-growth SL 28 trees that the family had recently begun pruning and topping. The elevation, tree stock, and revived vigor from the recent husbandry gives this incredible coffee its intensity and character. Annually, it is a very small lot, from a very small and special single-family estate in Kenya.



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.