



## Silimakuta Nuel and Norma

## North Sumatra, Simalungun, Sumatra

**Partner since:** 2019

**Traceable to:** Single Collector,  
100 Smallholders

**Altitude:** 1300 - 1400 MASL

**Varietals:** Sigararutang,  
LiniS795, Andungsari

**Processing:** Traditional  
Sumatran wet-hulled. Farmers  
pulp, ferment (in bags, 12 hrs)  
and dry for 3-4 days on their  
own farms, before delivery to  
the collector, Nuel. He then "wet  
hulls" the wet parchment down  
to green bean and patio dries for  
additional few days to export  
level.

**Harvest:** October November December January

**Booking:** December January February March

**Arrivals:** January February March April



On our first visit to Nuel and Norma, we immediately knew that this was a coffee family we wanted to work with. It ended up taking us a few years to finally get this coffee to the US. Nuel and Norma operate a small collection center in the small region of Silimakuta. They buy from about 100 farmers near Saribudolok and the north shore of Lake Toba. From the onset, Nuel and Norma appear as a typical, honest coffee collector family. Farmers deliver their coffee right to his porch. Their pulping and drying operations also look standard for a village collector in this region. But one step inside Nuel's home and you'll find they are far from ordinary. A hand-built roasting machine, an old Hario brewing device, and remnants of experiments strewn about reveal that he is passionate about coffee. He plays with wild and wacky drying and fermentation methods just for fun. This passion is much needed in this Simalungun region where lack of coffee knowledge and good agricultural practices have led to many farmers replacing coffee with orange trees over the past decade. The orange market here is subject to a lot more fluctuation than coffee- farmers often find themselves in a worse position. We aim to reverse this trend through better training and better prices. Nuel, Norma, and our staff in Sumatra are an integral part of this pursuit.



To talk about Sumatra we need to speak of its size. It's large. Larger than Texas and Florida combined. In the middle of the island is a caldera called Lake Toba: the largest caldera from the largest volcanic explosion this world has ever seen. In this lake there is an island bigger than the country of Singapore. It is because of this lake that Sumatra has the largest rainfall seen by any coffee exporting country – the lake feeds clouds trapped in by the island's 1500m tall mountains.

Sumatra is old. When Marco Polo visited the island's northern tip back in 1292, he found the local people speaking Sanskrit, one of the purest remaining forms of the ancient language. When the Dutch East Indian Trading Company came, Aceh (and later Java) became the first commercial coffee origins that the world had seen.

Sumatra is big; I know we already said that, but it is really, really big. There are over 52 languages over four major ethnic groups (Acehnese, Minangkabau, Batak and Mala) covering an area over 170,500 square miles around. However big the island, there is only one government-authorized port

of export – the 15 million person city of Medan. To get here, coffee has to travel as far as 375 miles, over massive mountains and on roads that are mostly still mud.

The northern coffee producing region of Gayo Aceh is 20 hours away and southern most Arabica regions in Kerinci are 24 hours. This is the main reason that Sumatran coffee is hulled while wet, and dried while in the green. This process, called Giling Basah, starts with coffee parchment being dried to 30-50% moisture before being milled into green beans. Higher moisture during transport from the farm to the port can lend to the classic 'earthy, musty' flavors that you get in some Sumatrans.

Another source of Sumatra's unique flavors dates back to the turn of the 20th century when Indonesia's coffee crop was wiped out by leaf rust. Much of this was replaced with HDT (Hybrid de Timor) (Bourbon x Robusta), its direct descendant Tim Tim, or the more modern Sigarar Utang (Tim Tim x Bourbon).

And these are Robusta-Arabica hybrids; over the generations these have only added more Arabica through crossing Tim-Tim and with Sigarar Utang (Ateng). But there are pure Arabica strains as well, like Jember (Bourbon x Typica), USDA (Ethiopian Arabica transplant), and Onan Ganjan (Jember x Bourbon). So the genetic stock is absolutely unique.

But what makes Sumatra truly unique are Sumatrans. As a new generation takes the reigns, they are taking the country headlong into specialty. The past years have seen an explosion of washed coffees, naturals, honeys, new varietals, new regions and new ways of thinking about Sumatra's role in specialty coffee. Not just locally, but regionally. So much of what comes out of Bali, Flores, Timor and Sulawesi comes through Sumatra. Indonesian coffee has so much to offer.