



The BOND of COFFEE

COFFEE CONSUMPTION IN ETHIOPIA

Story and photos by
Mark Shimahara

I recently traveled to Ethiopia on an Origin Approach expedition and was excited to see how coffee was celebrated there. For a variety of reasons, domestic consumption of coffee is low in most producing countries, but I knew coffee to have a strong social and economic influence in Ethiopia. It is the birthplace of coffee.

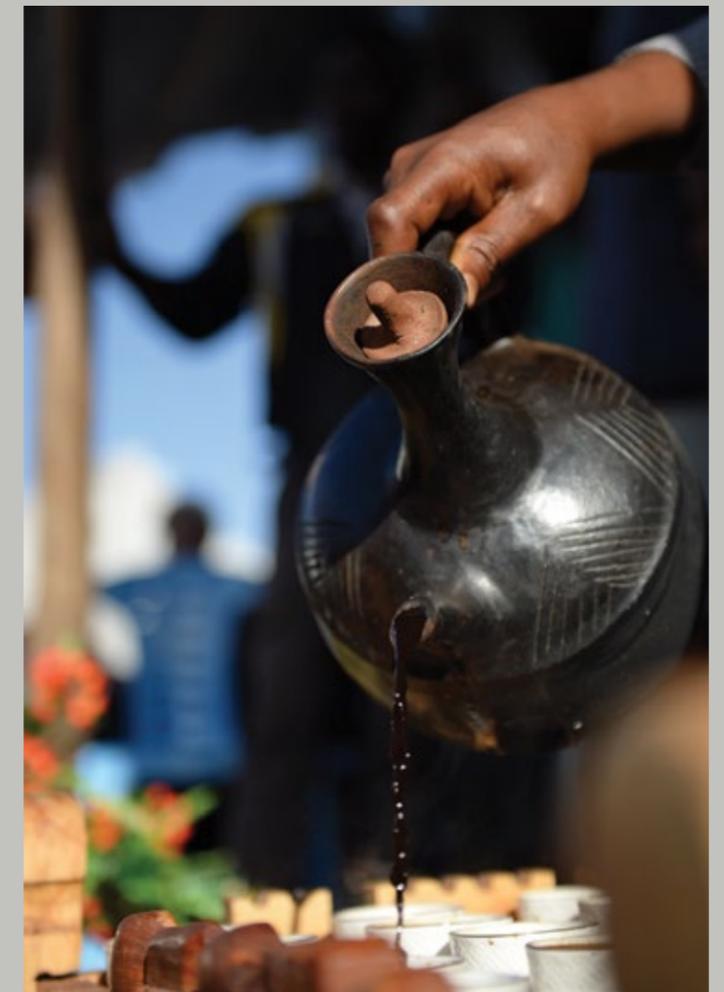
During the week-long trip, I came to understand the domestic consumption and availability of coffee in Ethiopia through immersion with coffee professionals, producers, and even the drivers we interacted with during the trip.

One of the topics of a seminar held on the first day was coffee consumption in Ethiopia. It was presented by Heleanna Georgalis, a third-generation Ethiopian and owner of Addis Ababa's Galani Café. Coffee in Ethiopia has a huge cultural and social significance dating back thousands of years. It is ingrained in Ethiopia's rituals and

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Pan-roasting green coffee at Kerchase's Anasora Washing Station.



At traditional coffee ceremonies, the coffee is steeped in the vessel for extraction.



Tomoca Coffee offers standing-only tables for a drink brief enough to enjoy it warm and long enough for a quick chat. Customers used no electronics or paper cups.

Tesfaye Zewdie, our driver, during a roadside coffee break. He drinks coffee that has been steeped in a vessel.



One of the topics during the first day's seminars was coffee consumption in Ethiopia. It was presented by Heleanna Georgalis, a third-generation Ethiopian and owner of Addis Ababa's Galani Café.

routines. She revealed that half of Ethiopian coffee is consumed domestically, and that it is second only to Brazil in domestic consumption among coffee-growing countries. Government restrictions, however, require the export of high-grade coffees, which are designated as "commercial" and "specialty." Coffee exports drive in foreign currency necessary to develop the local economy.

Later in the session, attendee Bruna Costa, general manager of Kamba Coffee, discussed national consumption in her home country of Brazil. There are no restrictions for domestic consumption in Brazil. Due to a vast variety of exports—including iron, crude and soy—Brazilians do not have to exclusively rely on coffee to grow their economy. Costa explained that in Brazil, the specialty coffee scene is growing and becoming consolidated, creating more demand for high-quality micro-lots. This has allowed farmers to fetch a higher price for their coffee internally, which is different from many exporting countries. She noted that

if domestic consumption restrictions were imposed in Brazil, the quality of coffee available in the domestic market could drop as cheaper coffees may be imported into the country, thus causing internal prices to go down. This would be unfair to farmers, and is something that all producing countries must contend with. Currently, Brazil is the exclusive supplier of green coffee within the country because it offers protections for farmers, but this isn't without limitations. Importing unroasted coffee is prohibited, which prevents local cafes and roasteries from offering coffee produced in other countries, and thus limiting the diversity of choices for Brazilian coffee drinkers.

In Ethiopia, there is clearly a domestic demand for coffee. Despite having one of the lowest gross domestic products (GDP) per capita of coffee-growing regions, around \$500 USD, Ethiopians drink about 200 cups a year. Simultaneously, as Ethiopian coffee quality improves, international demand for all grades of coffee increases, including those intended for domestic consumption. This limits the coffee

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The menu at a popular coffee chain, Kaldi's Coffee, which serves espresso-based coffee drinks. Kaldi's offers a fasting menu to respect the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's practice of not eating animal products on Wednesday, Friday, and during Lent.

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Interview with Fred Sklenar, founder of Abstrategy Design

Fred Sklenar is CEO and director of design experience at Abstrategy Design, a creative, innovation-centric product development agency based in Saint Paul, MN. Fred founded the firm in 1991 and some of their clients range from Braun to Danone to many other Fortune 500's as well as start ups.

Interview by Annette Hennekens, product development researcher.



AH: Why design coffee products?
 FS: As a product development firm, we found clients in the coffee industry to be highly interested in innovation and quality design. (And we drink a lot of coffee!)
AH: What started the design path for you?
 FS: My family was full of artists. I grew up in my grandmother's restaurant using older coffee equipment and I always wanted it to be made better. I earned my bachelor's in Industrial Design from Pratt Institute in New York City and when I started my firm I worked weekends as a waiter.
AH: What was the most memorable thing about

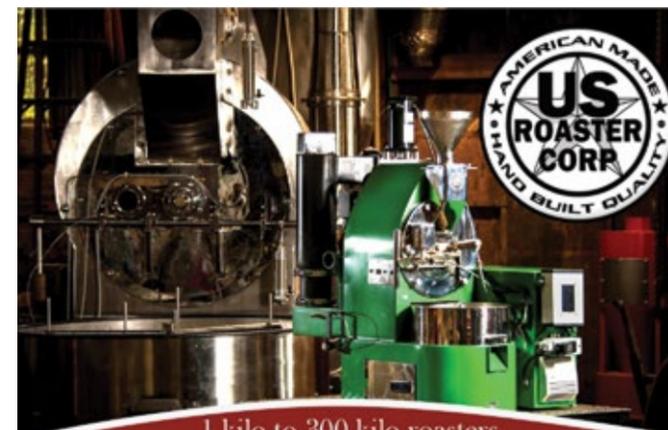
being a waiter?
 FS: After Gram retired and closed the restaurant, and to get cash during the start up of my firm, I worked weekends at a high-end Italian restaurant that had a machine that made instant espresso (YUK!) and for decaf, they simply added boiling water to regular coffee. I knew then that I wanted to design better experiences for coffee drinkers.
AH: What's unique about abstrategy?
 FS: Our process always focuses on the end user experience. Our emphasis on gaining a true understanding of their every day life informs our designs and the eventual successes of our client's products.
AH: What's the most fun at your agency?
 FS: Definitely making lattes with our Breville BES 920 cbxl-dual-boiler.
AH: I meant in your work:
 FS: Oh! For sure, it's working with end users. Making sketch models or prototypes of our designs and gaining feedback that informs the design process.
AH: What are you working on now?
 FS: Most all our work is confidential but we are incorporating new technologies into brewing systems, designing for today's connected home innovations and also developing barista products for better prep



and consumption experiences.
AH: What do you see as next for the coffee industry?
 FS: Continued innovation in connected-home, pour-over and cold brew as well as new things in tea brewing. ■

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Pan-roasting green coffee.

available for the local market. Israel Degfa, owner of Kerchanshe Trading, explained that while Ethiopians can consume a wider variety of coffee, the country requires a successful export to support its economy, whether it is through products other than coffee or by earning a higher price for its coffee. Until then, sacrificing Ethiopia's internal consumption is helping to grow the economy.

Coffee remains a huge part of the lifestyle in Ethiopia. As we traveled through the countryside, coffee was ubiquitous. Coffee is enjoyed at rest stops, roadside stands, cafes and restaurants—it is seemingly more available than bottled water.

Our driver, Tesfaye Zewdie, explained that many Ethiopians, including himself, consume coffee three to four times per day. For home consumption, he purchases 12 ounces of green coffee for 85 to 115 BIR (about \$3 to \$4 USD). Following the steps of a traditional coffee ceremony, he pan-roasts the green coffee, then immediately grinds and steeps the coffee in a kettle until it is served. The sediment is used for two more extractions, he explained, and by the third extraction it is so light that it may be shared with the children of the family. Coffee was commonly served in this method at roadside stalls, restaurants, and cafes that we passed along the way.

During our excursions, we enjoyed a coffee at prices between 15 to 35 BIR (around \$.50 to \$1.25 USD). Some of the more modern coffee shops in Addis serve exclusively espresso-based drinks, including the Ethiopia-based chain Kaldi's Coffee, as well as the local hangout Tomoca. Kaldi's offers a fasting menu to respect the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's practice of not eating animal products on Wednesday, Friday, and during Lent. For 15 BIR, you can pick up a cup coffee at Tomoca, where coffee is roasted on the premises using a commercial roaster. A standard coffee drink at these espresso-based shops is generally made up of



Cappuccino at Kaldi's Coffee.



In rural areas, 12 ounces of green coffee may be purchased from streetside vendors for around 85 BIR [\$3 USD].

equal parts espresso and water, measuring about 4 ounces. When I visited Tomoca's Bole location, more than a dozen locals filled the standing-only tables for a drink—long enough to enjoy it warm and have a quick chat. Customers didn't utilize electronics or paper cups, although sugar was readily available. At the higher-end shop Kalani's, drinks rival those of a specialty coffee shop in any consuming country around the world. Coffee is roasted on a Probat roaster, and offerings include coffee of various types—including iced and Turkish coffee, which are rare finds in Ethiopia.

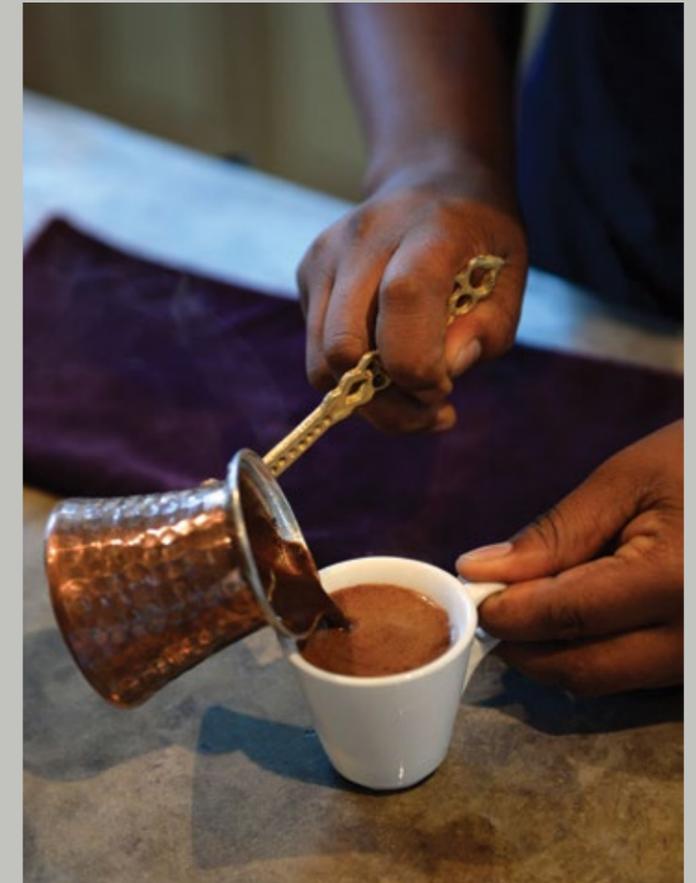
It elated me to see how this beverage I love is celebrated at origin. I've been to several countries that rely on coffee for export, where some of the producers have never tasted the beverage for themselves. While coffee in some places is more of a novelty, there is something about drinking coffee in Ethiopia that provides an immersive experience.

If you are drinking coffee, you are among the locals. It is not the flag of the foreigner, it is the common bond. I'll drink to that.



MARK SHIMAHARA is the author of *Coffee Covered: A Photographic Journey of Coffee From Farm to Cup*, and a photographer for *Roast*. In 2011, he went to coffee-growing communities in Guatemala to volunteer with *Coffee Kids* and the *Smithsonian Migratory Bird Institute*. Later that year, he placed second in the *World Siphonist Championships* in Tokyo. In his free time, he enjoys bike racing and hitting up coffee bars en route to his various destinations.

CORRECTION: An earlier version of this story suggested that exporting micro-lots of coffee from Brazil would result in a lower price than if it were sold on the internal market, which is not the case. Bruna Costa mentioned how farmers have both options, as internal specialty consumption is growing. Additionally, Costa's remarks about robusta coffee entering the Brazilian market have been clarified to reflect her intended message that allowing for cheaper coffees to be imported could be unfair to the farmer because of the resulting decline in coffee prices in the internal market. We apologize to Bruna Costa for misrepresenting her statements in this manner.



Turkish coffee at Galani Café in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



At Tomoca Coffee, espresso is served in the far right and left. In the middle is the "standard" coffee, made of equal parts coffee and water.