

PEOPLE PROFILES

THESE PROFILES are generated from responses to our Roaster Roundup form. Send in your profile for consideration to be featured in the next issue of *Roast* at roastmagazine.com/roaster-roundup.



Photo by Michael Page

BARBARA DE LA CRUZ

Bisbee Coffee Company | Bisbee, Arizona | bisbeecoffee.com

Where do you work and what is your role? How long have you been with the company?

I have been with Bisbee Coffee Company for two years. About a year ago, I was asked to help out in the roasting room once a week and later I became head roaster for the company! My role includes roasting, tasting and quality control; supplying roasted coffee to the coffee shop and surrounding businesses; packaging and shipping; and making sure I have a keen awareness of the ever-changing world of coffee that I have grown to know and love.

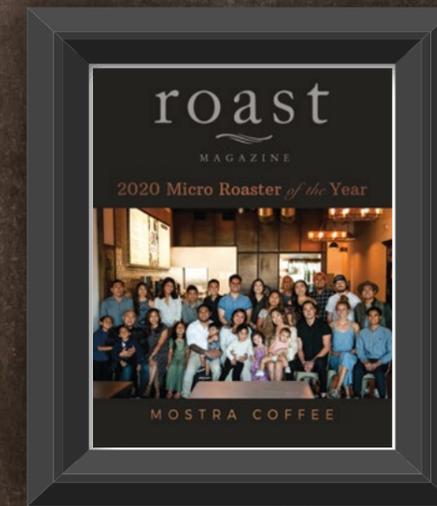
What is one piece of advice you would give to new roasters when they are starting out?

I am coming up on my one-year anniversary of being a coffee roaster, and it has been the most amazing and eye-opening year of my life. If I had one piece of advice that I could share to those just starting out, it would be to take the advice of others, mine included, with a grain of salt. Coffee is one of those things that is super subjective, and it can truly be left to one's personal preference. Keep an open mind, be innovative and, most of all, resilient. What you will find along the way is the ability that coffee has to take two worlds and completely integrate them. That is the phenomenon that I have become a witness to. I was 4 years old when I was introduced to "café con leche y azucar." My great-grandmother didn't speak a word of English but sitting over that kitchen table with coffee in our cups, we spoke. Coffee surpasses borders, language barriers included. Be proud that you get to be a part of facilitating just that.

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—Mostra Coffee, 2020 Micro Roaster of the Year



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What is your roasting ritual? Are there any unique things you require for a session or shift? What do you listen to while roasting?

Roasting for myself and I'm sure for many others is a complete sensory experience. I walk up the stairs juggling my keys, my hot cup of coffee, and I unlock a door that leads to the stillness of the roasting room. Like most roasters, I work in almost complete solitude. At seven o'clock in the morning, I am the mad scientist that works just above the heartbeat that is the downstairs coffee shop. A yawn or two later, you can find me scrubbing and tending to our exquisite cherry-red Diedrich IR-12. I like to compare the roaster to a symphony orchestra, and I its humble conductor. I don't require much when I roast other than a space that is clean and organized. I find that a clean external space creates a headspace that is simply ready for anything. When I roast, I like to listen to music from the country of my current roast's origin. This is a trick my mentor/boss taught me when I first started. He said that if you are to completely familiarize with a roast, you must listen to its music, aside from understanding its specific terroir.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of working in the coffee industry? What do you see as the greatest opportunities for coffee in the future?

When I explain to people that I am a coffee roaster, I

tend to get a wide range of strange looks. Some people have never thought about the work that goes into the roasted coffee that they buy at their local shop or the grocery store; they've simply never had to. That right there is the most rewarding part. Explaining to people that their coffee is originally green, and it is picked from an actual plant, and it goes through a countless number of physiological changes while being roasted. Even my mother was not too familiar with my line of work at first. With coffee being one of the top-selling commodities in the world, opportunity is never far. It speaks to those who are willing to listen. I hope for a future that is diverse, sustainable and transparent. I am just so grateful and proud to be a part of making that future happen.

What has been one of the most challenging aspects of the coffee industry for you personally? What troubles you?

Something that troubles me is the fact that the fate of the coffee industry lies within its ability to adapt to our changing planet. Climate change can and will affect the integrity of the coffee industry, making our planet unsuitable for growing the plant itself. I felt a sense of impending doom when this was brought to my attention. Imagining a world without coffee troubles me, but I try to have faith in myself, my generation, and those to come.

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