



GUATEMALA FT ORGANIC HONEY GRAINPRO

Notes: CARAMEL, CHOCOLATE, HONEY, MALT, WILD BLACK CHERRY

ORIGIN INFORMATION

Grower: Various Smallholder Farmers around the Joyabaj Wet Mill
Variety: Bourbon, Caturra,
Region: Joyabaj, Quiche Departament, Guatemala
Harvest: January - March
Altitude: 1,700 meters
Soil: Clay Loam
Process: Honey process
Certifications: Conventional

Coffee Background

Quiché is one of Guatemala's largest coffee departments, spanning from Chimaltenango's volcanic range all the way north to the Mexico border. While the northern half of Quiché is dominated by tropical lowlands, the department's southern regions are mountainous, traversed by the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes and Sierra de Chuacús ranges, which create a variety of high elevation micro-terroirs very well suited to coffee. Quiché is named for the K'iche' people, one of Guatemala's largest pre-Columbian indigenous groups. The Quiché department itself is over 65% K'iche' by population.

This coffee was grown and harvested by smallholder farmers in the Las Cuevas community and processed centrally at the Joyabaj ("ho-yah-bach") Wet Mill, in southern Quiché. The wet mill was newly constructed this past harvest by a specialty exporter organization, Federación Comercializadora de Café Especial de Guatemala (FECCEG), which represents a number of different smallholder farmer associations across Guatemala. This is the first time that central processing infrastructure has been available to the



greater Joyabaj communities and represents a new investment by FECCEG in the area.

FECCEG has worked with smallholder associations in Chimaltenango for years and had come to know growers in nearby southern Quiché over time, including the Joyabaj area specifically. FECCEG always believed in the quality potential around Joyabaj, where the producer culture has long valued full cherry ripeness and careful selection during harvesting. However, over time FECCEG has witnessed Joyabaj smallholders being overlooked and marginalized by regional investment spent elsewhere. This has led to the migration of many out of the region seeking employment in Guatemala's other departments or the United States and has steadily drained the agricultural areas of experience and labor. As a result, farms in this area, most of which are less than 2 hectares of coffee and subsistence crops, have remained vulnerable to low prices and without incentives or resources for farm reinvestment.

Once FECCEG identified the opportunity for centralized processing, they sent representatives of their own to collaborate with Joyabaj community leaders and locate the optimal site for the wet mill. This turned out to be in the center of Joyabaj city, where the most resources are available for maintenance, operation, and safety. The mill opened January 2021 and from then through April it processed its first 5,000 quintales of parchment coffee—about 2,400 bags of exportable green coffee.

To reach the mill, cherries are collected by designated couriers among the community, as not every farm has the means to transport their own pickings. Once received, cherry is separated by density using a siphon machine and then depulped and fermented in concrete tanks overnight. Once fermentation is complete the gooey parchment is transported to mechanical drum dryers where it is slowly rotated and dried in a carefully managed environment of 113-140 degrees Fahrenheit. Once dried, the finished parchment is transported to FECCEG's main dry mill in Quetzaltenango, where it is coded and stored for quality assessment. The long-term goal of the Joyabaj Wet Mill project includes not only reliable, top-quality coffee for export, but also critical aspects of farm sustainability, such as technical assistance, organic certification, entrepreneurship training for women, and community nurseries to rejuvenate coffee canopies.