



BRIDGEHEAD

FAIRLY TRADED, ORGANIC AND SHADE-GROWN COFFEES FROM SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

ABOUT BRIDGEHEAD

WE ARE A SPECIALTY coffee company that offers 100% fairly traded and organic coffees and teas. We link customers with small-scale farmers in developing countries through fair trade coffee and tea. And we are committed to providing excellent quality products from responsible and progressive sources at reasonable prices.

Our business is a complex web of relationships that begins with the grower and the land, extends to the shippers and suppliers, and in the end, connects our premium fairly traded products through our employees to our customers. Our vision and values guide our day-to-day decision-making.

Vision

We link our customers with small-scale farmers in the developing world through sustainable fair trade.

Mission

We demonstrate that business can be socially responsible and profitable. We strive to provide the highest quality products and service for our customers, while honouring these core values:

Values

- We maintain fair trade as the founding principle of our business
- We encourage community building locally and globally
- We create premium products for our customers
- We use organic and locally produced products wherever possible
- We consciously reduce our environmental impact
- We encourage a healthy, open and inclusive work environment
- We provide ongoing education and growth for employees and customers

Where we started and where we're growing

HISTORY

Bridgehead emerges as a grassroots movement in support of Nicaraguan farmers

Two United Church ministers and two social activists concerned for the prospects of small-scale coffee farmers in Nicaragua formed Bridgehead Trading in 1981. These farmers were contending with formidable odds; the pressure to trade through *coyotes* or intermediaries (often local traders or moneylenders who exploited growers), a civil war, and the restrictions of a U.S. trade embargo.

Bridgehead becomes the first company in Canada to offer consumers fairly traded coffee

Bridgehead imported, roasted, and distributed coffee purchased directly from small-scale farmers according to fair trade principles. A devoted group of volunteers sold Bridgehead coffee from Toronto



“Our business is a complex web of relationships that begins with the grower and connects our premium fairly traded products to our customers.”



BRIDGEHEAD OPENED ITS FLAGSHIP COFFEEHOUSE IN OTTAWA IN 2000

church basements and interest spread rapidly. With headquarters in Toronto, Bridgehead's fairly traded coffee was well received by consumers, and within three years the business outgrew its informal structure and voluntary management.

In 1984 Oxfam-Canada acquired the business and formally incorporated Bridgehead as a federal, for-profit company. Oxfam-Canada, an international development agency, sought to bring more fairly traded products to market and to share the stories of the small-scale artisans and farmers who made the products.

Bridgehead extends its product line from handpicked coffee to handicrafts

While fairly traded coffee remained Bridgehead's most important product, including sales to wholesale markets, a decision to diversify the product line was made. Fairly traded handicrafts were purchased from over 100 small-scale groups of artisans and farmers in over 50 countries. Bridgehead became a predomi-

nantly retail player, distributing a mail order catalogue in Canada and the U.S., and operating retail stores in Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. Annual sales grew to \$6 million and Bridgehead boasted a mailing list of 200,000 active names.

But diversifying product lines proved to be more troubling than expected. As sales revenues grew, profits dwindled then turned to losses. Bridgehead was left with too much inventory and too little working capital.

Bridgehead returns to its coffee roots

In May 1998 Bridgehead underwent restructuring, culminating in new ownership by Shared Interest, a cooperative lending society based in the U.K. that specializes in financing the fair trade sector. Shared Interest (U.K.) purchased the assets through a newly formed company, Bridgehead (1998) Inc.

Shared Interest sought to turn Bridgehead around but soon determined that without focusing its product offering and attracting

new investment to support it, Bridgehead could not survive. They determined that the best option was for Bridgehead to return to its coffee roots. Coffee was Bridgehead's first product, and it accounted for more than a third of Bridgehead's sales in 1999. In November 1999 Shared Interest dissolved Bridgehead (1998) Inc. and permitted management to return Bridgehead to its roots as a fairly traded coffee and tea company.

Bridgehead opens its flagship coffeehouse in Ottawa

In April 2000, the rights to Bridgehead (1998) Inc. were sold to Bridgehead (2000) Inc., a company formed by two members of Bridgehead's management team. On June 17, 2000 Bridgehead opened its flagship coffeehouse in Ottawa, Canada and renewed retail and wholesale sales of coffee and tea.

Bridgehead expands

Bridgehead expands its Ottawa-based cluster of coffeehouses and services its customers across Canada with its e-commerce website and call centre. Each year

A Bridgehead Chronology

1981 Bridgehead Trading is founded in a Toronto United Church.

1984 Bridgehead Trading is incorporated as Bridgehead Inc.

1985 Bridgehead Inc. is sold to Oxfam-Canada.

1986 Some 12,900 pounds of green beans are imported directly from Encafe, the Nicaraguan coffee marketing board and is processed in Canada by Bridgehead for the first time.

1987 Bridgehead produces its first catalogue, distributing 90,000 copies across Canada. New partnerships are formed with artisans and craftspeople

to complement those affiliations with farming groups and coffee growers.

1989 Bridgehead attends the first conference of the International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT) and becomes a founding member.

1990 Bridgehead's first retail store is opened in downtown Toronto.

1992 Bridgehead produces a spring catalogue for the first time.

1994 In association with Oxfam-America, Bridgehead serves US customers through its mail order catalogue.

1995 Bridgehead introduces products from small producers in Africa, First Nations communities and North American inner cities.

1996 Bridgehead's Ottawa-based store is moved to Sussex Drive and a new store is opened in Kitsilano, Vancouver. Bridgehead joins the Fair Trade Federation and forms an alliance with the Canadian Auto Workers Union Social Justice Fund.

1997 Bridgehead enters into a partnership with Equal Exchange. Equal Exchange supplies green beans imported directly from grower cooperatives and roasts coffee for Bridgehead, permitting Bridgehead to focus on distribution.

Bridgehead opens new coffeehouse locations to serve you better. Customers from across the country order our coffee, tea, and cocoa throughout the year.

FUTURE

We strive to be a positive demonstration of social and environmental sustainability for the Canadian coffee industry and beyond. We envision a cluster of Bridgehead coffeehouses in cities across Canada that offers the highest quality fair trade and organic coffees from small-scale farmers. We work toward this vision knowing that the quality of our products must be excellent and our customer service warm and engaged.

Bridgehead will continue to be a socially responsible business that delivers high quality products and service by ensuring that:

- Our coffees and teas are fairly traded
- Our coffees are shadegrown and organic;

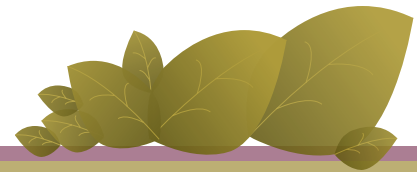
- our loose and packaged teas are organic
- Our coffees are roasted to order, ensuring freshness and prompt delivery
- We emphasize grower independence and dignity by guaranteeing a fair price for farmers
- We follow transparent, accountable and ethical business practices
- We review our business practices on a regular basis in order to increase the positive impact of social and economic benefits for farmers, customers, and partners

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

We envision a cluster of Bridgehead coffeehouses in cities across Canada that offers the highest quality fair trade and organic coffees from small-scale farmers. For our customers that are too far away to be served by one of our coffeehouses, we are happy to serve you through our e-commerce website or our call centre. We'll continue to share what we know

about fair trade, organics and about the people that bring you our excellent coffee, tea and chocolate. Our plan is to provide minority ownership opportunities to grower organizations, once we are able, as a way of distributing the profits in the cup more equitably. And we'll continue to seek positive social and environmental impacts in the way we do business.

“We envision a cluster of Bridgehead coffeehouses in cities across Canada.”



ORGANICS

WHAT DOES ORGANIC MEAN?

Organic agriculture respects nature and growers' health by ensuring that Bridgehead coffee is grown without chemicals that are harmful to farmers and to the environment. Organic coffee earns important premiums for farmers that ensure sustainable farming communities.

All Bridgehead coffees and teas are certified organic. Certification means that an independent inspector has monitored the on-farm activities and has verified that all practices are in compliance with organic standards. Our coffee roastery has also been certified by the Organic

Crop Improvement Association (OCIA). Growers of Bridgehead coffees and teas have received organic certification from respected certification agencies (e.g., OCIA), many of which are accredited by IFOAM (International Federation for Organic Agricultural Movements).

Organic farming methods work in harmony with natural biological processes without using any artificial chemicals nor genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Organic management is more labour-intensive than conventional farming and may involve composting, controlling weeds and pests by hand, and maintaining

biodiversity of shade cover and companion plants. These practices are designed to encourage the use of natural biological methods that preserve the environment, ensure sustainability, and protect growers' health.

ORGANICS CLOSER TO HOME

We also continue to look for opportunities to integrate more organic products into our coffeehouse and mail order food programs. Our organic products include, for example, milk, cream, selected vegetables, nuts, and spices.

1998 Bridgehead enters a restructuring process, culminating in new ownership by Shared Interest, a cooperative lending society based in the UK that specializes in financing to the fair trade sector.

2000 In a final phase of restructuring, Bridgehead closes its retail stores in Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver in order to return the company to its fairly traded coffee and tea roots. Shared Interest transfers ownership of Bridgehead to the company's management team. On June 17, 2000 Bridgehead opens its flagship retail coffeehouse at 362 Richmond Road in Ottawa, Canada, and offers retail and wholesale sales of premium coffees and teas.

2001 Bridgehead opens a second coffeehouse at 108 Third Avenue in the Glebe, Ottawa.

2002 Bridgehead opens a third coffeehouse at 366 Bank Street, Ottawa and a kitchen and warehouse facility to provide freshly made baked goods, soups, salads, and sandwich fillings daily to our coffeehouses.

2004 Bridgehead opens its fourth coffeehouse at 1277 Wellington Street, Ottawa in August.

2005 Bridgehead opens its fifth coffeehouse at 282 Elgin Street, in July.

2006 Bridgehead opens its sixth and seventh coffeehouses at 109 Bank Street and 131 Beechwood Avenue respectively.

2007 Bridgehead opens its eighth coffeehouse at 224 Dalhousie Street in March and ninth coffeehouse at 1172 Bank Street in September.

2008 Bridgehead moves its 108 Third Avenue location to 750 Bank Street (@ 2nd Avenue) in December.

WHAT IS FAIR TRADE?

An alternative to global trading with a humane purpose

Fair trade is an alternative trading practice with a humane purpose: to help family farmers in developing countries gain direct access to international markets, as well as to develop the business capacity necessary to compete in the global marketplace.

A better economic future for small-scale farmers and their families

By learning how to market their own harvests through cooperatives, small-scale farmers are able to slowly grow their own



businesses and receive a fair price for their products. The fair trade certification is a guarantee that farmers receive a fair price. This leads to higher family living standards, thriving communities and more sustainable farming practices.

A means of preserving sustainable farming methods

Fair trading companies from around the world buy direct from farmers. Because advance credit and guaranteed prices are provided, these farmers get a bit of room to breathe. They don't have to sacrifice

everything to maximize coffee production. They don't have to rely solely on coffee for an income. And because they don't clear-cut their land, they are able to grow alternative cash crops or subsistence crops alongside coffee trees. In short, they can farm in a way that preserves the land for future generations, that is healthy for their families and communities, and that protects local and migratory birds.



THE ENVIRONMENT

A biodiverse habitat under the canopy of shade trees

Coffee is a shade-loving shrub that flourishes amid the cover of diverse tree species. So do the hummingbirds, swallows, warblers, orioles, and other native and migratory birds that find sanctuary in the lush forests, for example, in Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Colombia. Under the canopy of shade trees, traditional coffee farms help preserve diverse ecosystems, providing a natural habitat for insects, micro-organisms, animals, and migratory birds. Some 95% fewer bird species are found on large-scale modern coffee plantations than on traditional shade-grown plantations.

A way to ensure healthier soil and safer groundwater

Modern large-scale coffee productions often demand intensive clear-cutting of the land, depriving migratory songbirds and other wildlife of their natural habitat. By reducing biodiversity, clear-cutting contributes to soil erosion and necessitates

the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides that infiltrate local groundwater. By contrast, a tree canopy helps to create natural mulch for coffee plants, preserves healthy soil, and keeps groundwater safe for local populations by eliminating the need for harmful pesticides.

Beyond organic farming practices that preserve the environment and natural biological processes, our commitment to the environment is evident in our local purchasing, transportation, and waste disposal policies and practices.

Our local environmental footprint

All of our deliveries from our Kitchen to our Ottawa coffeehouses are delivered with a Vrtucar, a shared-use vehicle that we reserve for several hours each day. By using this community-use vehicle we are helping to reduce the number of vehicles on the road.

We source from local companies, whenever possible, that grow produce or manufacture products locally to reduce

transportation requirements, for example, milk, cream, and honey.

We have a recycling (paper, glass, plastics, metal) and composting program in each coffeehouse that reduces our waste substantially. We have invested in reusable shipping containers to transport coffee and kitchen goods to our coffeehouses. We continue to research packaging, service, and cleaning products that have a higher recycled content and that are considered more environmentally responsible by Canadian environmental certifiers.

We're also pleased to offer you used coffee grounds for your garden. Coffee grounds help to make great compost, particularly when combined with leaves and grass to balance acidity. Compost provides soil with texture and replenishes nutrients needed for healthy plant growth. Grounds can also be applied directly to a garden's acid loving plants such as roses or hydrangeas. Ask for used grounds at any Bridgehead coffeehouse.



BRIDGEHEAD AND FAIR TRADE

BRIDGEHEAD IS PART of an international movement of fair trade distributors and small-scale producers committed to offering consumers superior quality products; educating consumers about the unequal wealth distribution that pervades our global trading system; and ensuring that alternative trading practices promote social, economic and environmental justice. Since 1981, Bridgehead has followed international fair trade principles and has selected partners that are committed to them.

We also offer an independent guarantee of fair trading practices to our customers – monitoring by TransFair Canada. TransFair is the recognized Canadian body that audits member business transactions to ensure that the international fair trade criteria have been honoured. The TransFair logo is your assurance that the coffee was purchased from cooperatives of small-scale growers who received a fair price. For tea growers, it means that fair wages, and social and environmental standards were in place, and additional funds for local community development were provided.

If you have questions about our fair trade practices, please write us at inquire@bridgehead.ca.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF FAIR TRADE

- To provide growers with direct access to coffee markets by working through grower cooperatives, avoiding middlemen and speculators
- To pay a fair price to growers that covers the cost of production and leaves a margin for investment purposes
- To establish long-term, equitable relationships with all fair trade partners
- To ensure communities benefiting from fair trade revenue play an active role in their own development
- To promote social, environmental, economic justice in all fair trade activities

(Source: Fair Trade Yearbook, Towards 2000)

COFFEE TASTING

TO BEGIN, there are four varieties of coffee plant but only two are sold on a commercial scale, *Arabica* and *Robusta*.

Robusta beans have higher caffeine content than Arabica beans and a rougher, almost earthy flavour that lacks delicacy and subtlety. It costs about half the price of Arabica and is used in the cheaper blends of both fresh and instant coffee.

Arabica coffee grows on steep mountain slopes at high altitudes. This bean produces coffee that is rich, aromatic and full of flavour, accounting for 70 percent of world coffee production. Coffee experts agree that the Arabica bean is far superior in flavour to other types. Within the Arabica family, there are several different varieties of plant including tipica, caturra, catimor, and bourbon. Bridgehead coffees are made of only the highest quality Arabica beans.

From Crop to Cup

Many of us take coffee for granted. It's something we often grab on the go and drink without thinking where it came from. The coffee you drink, whether or not it's fair trade, has traveled a long journey to reach you. And many people have worked hard to bring it to you. Here is that path in summary.

HARVESTING – It takes roughly five years for a coffee tree to mature enough to produce coffee cherries. Individual coffee cherries are hand-picked at their peak of ripeness, typically when the cherry is red.

DEPULPING* – The very same day, the fruit of the red cherry is stripped away from the inner pair of beans. The beans are soaked overnight in water to gently ferment them and are later rinsed again to remove the sweet “honey” coating.

DRYING AND MILLING* – The coffee beans are spread on concrete patios to dry in the sun or heated slowly in large drying ovens. They must be turned frequently to ensure even moisture content. At about 12% humidity, the beans are stable and can be stored for several months. After drying, the beans still have a golden papery skin, or ‘parchment’ covering. This covering is milled off prior to export, showing the raw green coffee bean within.

SORTING – Some sorting by colour and density can be done by machine, but the proven method of sorting out defective beans is by hand. This is a very important step, because a key element of good coffee



is the absence of defective beans. After the beans are sorted, they are packaged in 100 lb. coffee sacks and are ready for export.

ROASTING – Beans are shipped and stored in a warehouse until they are ready to roast. We carefully develop a roast profile for each origin to ensure that the unique characteristics of the bean emerge. And most importantly we roast once a week to ensure that our coffee is always fresh. Once roasted, it is ready to grind and enjoy your way.

* These steps describe the washed process, used for most Arabica coffees. The unwashed (also called dry or natural) process dries the beans before depulping. This imparts an earthy flavour. Only two of our coffees are not washed: Sumatran is semi-washed (partial drying before depulping), and the Brazilian is natural.

“Coffee cupping involves slurping the brew quickly from the side of a broad spoon to maximize the aeration and exposure to your taste buds.”

COFFEE BREWING TIPS

BREW THE PERFECT CUP OF COFFEE IN SIX EASY STEPS:

1. Start with freshly roasted, specialty coffee. Keep your coffee in an air-tight opaque container and out of direct sunlight to maintain freshness. Only consider keeping coffee in the freezer if you're not going to use an open package for more than one month.
2. Use fresh, cold water.
3. Use the correct grind for your brewing method. A grind that is too coarse can result in a weak cup of coffee. A grind too fine can clog your coffee machine and create a bitter taste.
4. Coffee strength is a matter of taste. Some may like it stronger or weaker. We suggest starting with two table-
spoons of coffee to 6 ounces of water, and adjust according to taste.
5. Be sure your coffee maker (e.g. manual drip filter, electric drip filter, press pot, stove top vacuum pot) is clean as residues of stale coffee oils will interfere with good flavour.
6. Use a brewing method (such as manual drip filter, press pot, vacuum pot, or high-quality electric drip) which will produce temperatures of 195 - 205 degrees F. Never boil or reheat coffee. Enjoy your coffee as soon as possible, as it will retain optimum flavor and aroma for approximately 30 minutes after brewing.



COFFEE CUPPING

COFFEES ARE COMPARED by formally tasting them in a set or series for comparison purposes. Similar to wine tasting, coffee cupping involves slurping the brew quickly from the side of a broad spoon to maximize the aeration and exposure to your taste buds. Observations are made in terms of aroma, acidity, body, and flavor.

AROMA is the smells that the coffee evokes which are key in conveying flavour.

ACIDITY is a tangy sensation in your mouth. Acidity ranges low to high.

BODY is a sense of heaviness on your tongue. Body ranges from light to full.

FLAVOUR is the resulting impression of the combined aroma, acidity, and body.

The Caffeine Question:

All true teas (originating from the Camellia varieties) contain some caffeine, but in varying degrees. Generally, green teas have less per cup than black teas, and both usually have less than a cup of brewed coffee. See table below:

Relative Caffeine Content of common beverages and foods

| Caffeinated Product | Range(mg) |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Coffee (8-oz cup) | |
| <i>Brewed</i> | 65-120 |
| Tea, loose or bags (8-oz) | |
| <i>3-min brew</i> | 20-46 |
| <i>5-min brew</i> | 20-50 |
| <i>Iced (12-oz)</i> | 22-36 |



THE COFFEE YOU DRINK HAS TRAVELED A LONG JOURNEY TO REACH YOU.

©: ERIC ST. PIERRE



BRIDGEHEAD TEAS ARE PART OF THE SMALL ORGANIC FARMERS' ASSOCIATION (SOFA) IN KANDY, SRI LANKA

PHOTO: ERIC ST. PIERRE

OUR TEA GROWERS

Bio Foods - Small Organic Farmers' Association

Bridgehead's green tea, orange pekoe, and lemongrass come from Bio Foods (PVT) Ltd., Sri Lanka. Bio Foods' main areas of business are organic cultivation, harvesting and processing quality organic Green Teas, Black Teas, Naturally flavoured teas, Herbal teas, Spices and Fruits. Bio Foods has gained a strong reputation as a quality exporter in the European Markets.

Bridgehead teas are part of the Small Organic Farmers' Association (SOFA) in Kandy, Sri Lanka. It is one of Bio Foods' most successful programs through which organic green teas, special black teas, medicinal herbal mixtures, spices, fruits, vegetables are hygienically produced for export markets.

Bio Foods has made substantial investments on research and development in improving the Tea Industry in Sri Lanka. Close supervision and controls have ensured consistency and high quality. Bio Foods, an environmentally friendly organization in Sri Lanka, minimizes the usage of artificial materials including packaging in order to prevent pollution.

Objectives:

- Encourage small-scale farmers to follow organic agricultural practices
- Carry out research and development work on processing of tea, herbs, spices, fruits and vegetables
- Process high quality organic black & green teas, selected herbal teas, fruits, vegetables and spices
- Contribute to the advancement in socio-economic standards of the farmer community

Benefits to Farmers:

- Higher guaranteed price per kg is paid for green leaf
- Farmers receive continuous advisory services on organic agricultural practices

- Bio Foods (PVT) Ltd. purchases other raw materials from farmers for processing and exporting
- Cattle are donated to farmer families to assist in preparation of compost manure and to generate additional income from milk sales.

Tea Promoters (India) Private Limited

Most of Bridgehead's black teas come from Tea Promoters (India). Tea Promoters is fully committed to what is now popularly known as organic and biodynamic tea cultivation. Tea Promoters also supports efforts to uplift the human communities that live and work in the tea gardens so as to create a harmonious frame for sustainable economic and social development.

Tea Promoters' gardens are accredited with the internationally reputed Naturaland Association, a full member of the international Federation of Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and a member foundation of a German umbrella organization the Association of organic Agriculture in Germany (AGOL). The Institut inspects of Tea Promoters' gardens for Marketecologie (IMO). They are the leading inspectors of organic tea with worldwide quality control activities in for all kinds of organic products.

Tea Promoters has several gardens:

- **Seeyok, Mirik District:** These gardens are nestled on the slopes of the Himalayas, at 1,100 – 1,800 m above sea level. Its 500 growers have perfected the art of plucking at the peak moments to produce our Darjeeling standard. It is also used in the English Breakfast and Earl Grey blends.
- **Putharjhora, Oodlarbari District:** Flanked by two rivers in North Bengal, the fertile alluvial soil produces a classic black tea used as the base for the traditional Masala Chai.

Tea Tasting

LIKE COFFEE CUPPING, teas are compared by formally tasting them – usually tasted in a set or series for comparison purposes. Observations are made about the appearance and colour of the dry leaves and in the brew, then aroma and flavour also come into play. As with coffee cupping, tea cupping also involves slurping the brew quickly from the side of a broad spoon to maximize the aeration and exposure to your taste buds.

Key Tea Characteristics:

MAKE – Description of the dry leaf, which ultimately affects the taste quality. Often left to the expertise of professional cuppers not of common interest to customers.

AROMA – The fragrance of the steeping leaves – an important factor in the enjoyment of certain teas.

LIQUOR – The qualities of the liquid, describing the colour and other characteristics.

BODY – More properly considered an aspect of the liquor, this refers to the 'weight' or relative thick/thinness of the liquor.

FLAVOUR – Descriptive notes of certain flavour notes or overall impressions.

- **Banaspaty, Karbi Anglong District:** This tea garden provides pure Assam tea as well as that found in the English Breakfast blend.
- **Other TPI gardens include** Sama-beong, Teesta District and Selimbong, Rungbong District

Clef des Champs

- Spearmint peppermint, chamomile, hibiscus



TEA BREWING TIPS



Preparing an excellent cup of tea is ritualistic and satisfying. Once you've determined the steps to brewing a perfect cuppa, you will insist on making it the same way every time. Here are our basic tips for brewing an excellent cup.

- Preheat your teapot with hot water
- Pour 2 cups of hot water over one teaspoon of our premium quality loose leaf tea
- Strain through a tea strainer and enjoy

You might think that all tea loves boiled water; however there are some important subtleties in water temperature that can maximize the flavour of your leaves:

- Black tea yields better flavour if the water used to brew the tea is brought to a full, rolling boil. Let steep 2 to 5 minutes
- Green tea has a better flavour if the water used to brew the tea is brought to just before the boil begins. Let steep 1 to 3 minutes
- Herbal infusions have a better flavour if the water used to infuse the leaves is brought to a full rolling boil. Let steep 7 to 10 minutes.

Visit our Shop Online section to purchase our Limited Edition coffees and teas.

Cocoa and Sugar

“The Maya created what we now know as chocolate.”

THE MAYA CREATED what we now know as chocolate by fermenting, drying and roasting the beans and then grinding the kernels to produce cocoa mass (chocolate liquor). Here is a modern day version of each step in the laborious process of creating fine chocolate.

Harvesting

Once the flowers are pollinated the pods take 5-6 months to grow and mature to the yellowish red color of the ripened pod. The pods are harvested manually. Once harvested, they may keep for about a week before spoiling. After harvesting the pods

are carefully cut open with machetes and the beans with the pulp are removed.

Fermentation

The beans with pulp are placed in large boxes, or just in heaps, covered with banana leaves and left to ferment. The fermentation process gives flavour to the beans and the pulp slowly liquefies and runs off as the temperature rises. This takes up to a week. The beans start to germinate in the first couple of days of fermentation, soon to be killed by the high heat produced by the fermentation. This stage is important since ungerminated beans lack flavour. The mass is turned from time to time so hot spots don't develop and to maintain the temperature around 110° F to 120° F.

Drying and Roasting

The beans are then dried either on patios for a couple of weeks, or in an oven with continuous turning in order to reduce the moisture content to about 7%. Then the beans are packed to be sent to chocolate factories, mostly overseas. When the dried beans are received at the factory they are artfully roasted at 200° F to 250° F for one to two hours in order to develop the flavour of the beans. The beans become brown in color and friable (brittle).

Grinding and Extraction

The roasted beans are broken down and the thin shell (chaff) is removed in the process called winnowing. The remaining pieces of kernel are called cacao nibs, which have the final chocolate flavour as we know it. Nibs contain about 400 different chemicals responsible for the flavour of the final products.

The nibs are ground under heavy steel rollers with heat. The grinding process also produces its own heat. The nibs change into a thick paste called cacao liquor and contain about 50-55% cacao butter.

Next, the liquor is filtered using hydraulic presses to remove the colorless cacao butter, which is a liquid. The cacao in the form of a cake remaining is used for further processing into cocoa, hot chocolate and cheap commercial chocolates. The cake contains about 10-20% butter. High quality gourmet chocolates are made from cacao liqueur. ●



THE COCOA BEANS ARE DRIED ON PATIOS FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS