

San José

Antigua, Guatemala

 VARIETY: Bourbon, Catimor, Sarchimor	 PROCESS: Washed	 HARVEST TIME: January-April	 FLOWER SEASON: May-June
 ELEVATION: 1500-1560 MASL		 PRODUCER: Miriam Florence Aguirre Wyld de Urruela & Florence Aguirre de Fanjul	
		 WET MILLING: Separated by density, mechanically depulped, fermented 12-16 hours, with a second wash in fresh water canals	
		 DRYING: Concrete patio, covered raised beds, guardiolas	
		 DRY MILLING: Electronically sorted for color and density, mechanically hulled	

Finca San José is located in Antigua, Guatemala, a region surrounded by three volcanoes: Agua, Acatenango, and Fuego, the latter of which visibly erupts several times an hour. The nutrient-rich volcanic soil, cool weather, and high altitude contribute to ideal growing conditions and sturdy, high quality cups.

Led by mother-daughter duo Miriam Florence Aguirre Wyld de Urruela and Florence Aguirre de Fanjul, Finca San José has been selling their coffee cherry to Beneficio Bella Vista—the washing station and dry mill with which Joe Coffee also has a long, committed partnership—for over 20 years. Bella Vista is renowned in specialty coffee for their dedication to quality and their subsequent passion for raising awareness of the profile of Guatemalan coffees throughout the world.



This year, when the Joe Coffee roasting team spoke with Melanie Herrera, agronomist at Bella Vista, to request samples for Joe’s single origin menu, she immediately offered up the chance to taste coffees from the intergenerational, family-run Antigua farm. From Melanie’s perspective, “we are always seeking for more opportunities in the market for small producers so we have been working hard on separating lots from Hunapu, and San José is a perfect case where we can highlight the hard work of women in coffee, their struggles, and their accomplishments.”

Once at Beneficio Bella Vista, the Antiguan coffee is separated by density in floating tanks: heavier fruit is sent to a depulper before taking up residency in fermentation tanks with recycled, treated water. To reduce water waste, holding tanks keep only the designated amount of water needed and connect to fermentation tanks through water channels. After about 12 to 16 hours of fermentation in a greenhouse-like covered environment, the coffee is washed again in freshwater canals. The wet parchment coffee is then dried in guardiolas or on concrete patios and covered raised beds for up to 7 days, and is constantly raked, piled, and covered to ensure even drying and protection from heat and rain.

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After the coffee is dry processed, it goes through a series of sorting and quality control checks before sampling and selection. Selected coffees are re-sorted, hulled, bagged, and stored in Bella Vista's dry mill before export.



Coffee production is integral to the Zelaya family, who operates Beneficio Bella Vista. Now managed by fourth-generation producer Luis Pedro Zelaya, Beneficio Bella Vista is itself known for its meticulous processing and its emphasis on farm management. Luis Pedro follows a cyclical pruning regimen: each year, a third of plants on the farm are pruned. While another third grows, the remaining third is at full production. In investing this patience and effort into their farm management, the Zelaya family is able to better manage and stagger yields.

Bella Vista also makes efforts to share this methodology with their small producer partners, emphasizing tissue management with shade and coffee plants. In conversation with Melanie Herrera earlier this year, she shared more about their programs: “We try to vary the way the [topics such as tissue management, nutrition, control of plagues and diseases, harvest, cost management and climate change] are imparted [throughout the year] so producers can participate and feel more involved and committed to the topics and program.”

It was through this educational effort that the Bella Vista team was able to get to know the owners behind Finca San José. Bella Vista shared with us that, as Miriam Florence, the more senior of the San José ownership pair, grew older, it was harder for her to fully physically engage at the farm. In response, her daughter Florence started an intensive season of training and education to better support her mother, focusing on the market, production, and processing of coffee. With Bella Vista's support, Florence put her thirst for knowledge into action, and sought out better market opportunities for her family's coffee. Bella Vista in turn invited her and her employees to their smallholder farmer Hunapu program training sessions, and also started separating their coffee in the beneficio's processing facilities.

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Joe Coffee has actually unknowingly benefitted from their work already—coffee from Finca San José has been represented in Bella Vista’s Bella Carmona blend, a coffee that Joe has purchased in the past. Now, we are so grateful to be able to showcase this trajectory of visibility and mutual growth. In conversation with Melanie, we asked more about the team’s goals and what Bella Vista hopes to accomplish from their work separating out coffees by female producers.

“For Bella Vista it is important to provide equal opportunities to small producers. We don’t see gender, race, age, or anything else. Our program is inclusive, even accessible for producers who don’t deliver their cherries here but want to learn how to produce more and with better quality. We work on the premise that we only have better opportunities as a country if we all improve in what we are doing.

However, if we add context to this, in some cases women face challenges that are more



related to culture. In the context of small producers' culture, the person in charge of providing income for the household is the male. And women normally get a chance to support with income during the harvest season of coffee. We have seen this evolving and changing for the better. And we are actively involved in generating equal opportunities for men and women.

A clear example is the coffee high school program with the support of Funcafe and APCA (Association of Producers of Genuine Antigua Coffee). Our goal is to provide study opportunities to people who, for whatever reason, were unable to continue their studies. At Hunapu and the farms we manage, we encourage producers and workers (and their sons and daughters) to continue their studies in order to help grow the family business or economy. We are also supporting women in different roles: Florence on the producing side, and many more! We want to empower women but also anyone else who wants to work hard!”

An exciting representation of this quality-focused Antiguan partnership, the coffee itself presents sweet layers of jammy fruits (think: ripe melon, poached pear) upon first sip, while slowly arcing toward the more familiar flavors of the region: big chocolate, soft acidity, and infinite sweetness.