

Illary Tamaya

Quillabamba, Cusco, Peru

 VARIETY: Typica, Caturra, Bourbon, Catimor	 PROCESS: Washed	 HARVEST TIME: June-August	 FLOWER SEASON: September-December
 ELEVATION: 1500-1900 MASL	 PRODUCER: Smallholder Women Growers	 DRYING: Fully sun-dried on beds and patios	 DRY MILLING: Stored in parchment and shipped to Lima for dry milling when shipped

Nestled deep in the southern highlands of Peru lies Quillabamba, a coffee-growing region lush with forest, biodiversity, and the natural beauty inherent in each. Throughout Quillabamba and the greater province of Cusco, community collaboration plays a huge role in everyday life, and for the women who make up the producer group Illary Tamaya, coffee production is no exception. Though the group is made up of about 25 smallholder farmers, the women see themselves as a community of fighters and forward-thinkers—in Quechua, their chosen name translates to “the dawn of the empowered woman.”



At the center of this coffee lies tropical sweetness, with supporting notes of tart apricot and dark chocolate that bring complexity and stability to the cup. As mothers, community leaders, employers, and much more, the women of Illary Tamaya are no strangers to building structure and balance for themselves and their loved ones, a talent that translates into each warm, intriguing, and familiar sip.

Made up of Typica, Caturra, Bourbon, and Catimor, this fully washed lot comes from about 15 women producers, sourced through our longterm partners, Caravela. Caravela first began working in the Quillabamba region about 5 years ago, and we were thrilled to purchase our first coffee¹ from here back in 2020.

With the craggy highlands of the Andes Mountains bisecting the country like a tectonic zipper down the middle, physical geography plays a huge role in forming numerous and unique coffee-growing cultures in Peru. While co-operatives play an important part in some regions, they account for only about 30-40% of farmers, with those scattered, in relative isolation, throughout the high altitudes of the southern highlands facing a much less robust infrastructure for moving coffee to cities and ports.

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Climate, of course, also vastly influences the harvest methods and processes commonly used in the southern highlands, making fully washed coffees the most prominent process here. Typically, the coffee produced by Illary Tamaya is fully washed and traditionally fermented for 16-20 hours on individual farms, where it is then dried on covered patios or raised beds. Coffees are then delivered to Caravela in Quillabamba, where they're graded and shipped to Lima. There, they're stored in parchment and then milled when shipped for export.

Over the last few years, Caravela has worked closely with the women of Illary Tamaya, establishing a relationship based on mutual trust and respect, through special attention from PECA, their education and quality team. When first approached by the team, many of the women who were invited to showcase their talent and quality were initially skeptical, believing that their coffee wasn't going to be treated any differently than normal. But in true grassroots fashion, a few pioneers forged ahead with the group, and trusted members of their communities soon followed suit. After an extremely successful first harvest, Caravela committed to paying the group an extra premium for the next one, to continue to encourage these growers to keep up their high caliber work.

Today, the growers of Illary Tamaya are overwhelmingly proud of their work and full of entrepreneurial spirit. As self-proclaimed fighters, these individuals have overcome immense obstacles, often in search of creating a better life for their families, and improving the well-being of their communities. They are delighted to serve as an example for other women like them, who have also successfully managed to run their own businesses, and are empowered by the customer recognition they receive.

