

SHG Altura Chiapas - Tenejapa (GrainPro)



The world of quality coffee never ceases to enrich, fulfill, and stimulate the lives of those involved in its journey from crop to cup. Café Imports finds itself yet again in the coffee-filled hills of Mexico's southern Chiapas region; strengthening existing relationships and seeking out new ones. After a series of travel from Mexico City, to Tuxtla Gutierrez, through the culture-rich city of San Cristobal de Las Casas and over the slopes to the west, Piero Cristiani and myself make it to the pueblo of Tenejapa, a small town rooted deeply in its indigenous beginnings. This year we have decided to book an entire container of high-end coffees from the Tzeltal people that reside in the Tenejapa sub-region, near the city of Chikt'antuk.

Upon arrival we are welcomed with a ceremony consisting of the tribe's elders dressed from head to toe in their lasting culture's attire accompanied by traditional music. Sombreros draped with a plethora of brightly colored tassels, black sheepskin vests fastened with copper-stamped buttons, fine-stitched woolen skirts, and bull-horn flasks containing the local brew; a fermented corn liquor. As customary, the guests are offered a taste and the music and dance commences. A twelve string guitar accompanied by a hand-made harp and fiddle fill the city center with song as the tribe's elders dance along in step. Seeing the almost ninety year-old

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Origin	Mexico
Region	Chiapas, Municipio de Tenejapa
Farm	Chixtontik
Variety	Bourbon, Caturra, Typica
Altitude	1300-1600m
Proc. Method	Fully Washed



supreme elders two-stepping along left me no choice but to join the movement for a song or two. The massive unpruned Bourbon trees and spot-planting method give testament to this. Pickers are more like gatherers in their rather slow process of winding through the forest, bending plants in all directions to reach mature cherries on upper shoots. Having cupped this coffee into the high eighties with notes of blueberries and honey butter, I was eager to see the Tzeltal's processing methods. Yet again, I find an original style. After being gathered from the farm, the ripe cherries remain in the sack they were collected in overnight and undergo a slight dry-fermentation process before pulping. The softened cherries are pulped the next morning. This pre-fermentation process most likely accounts for the strong berry aroma and sweetness in cup. As this is a newly sourced coffee, I am eager to see which roasters will be the first to develop a supportive profile to highlight the qualities of this bean.

Our stay in Chiapas was generously accommodated by E-Café, a unique organization that is relatively new to the quality coffee world. The majority of their coffee staff are Korean non-profit volunteers that live and teach at a boarding school in Comitan, Chiapas. E-Café profits are used to fund the boarding school. Many of the students are children of coffee farmers that E-Café works with. At the E-Café location in Comitan lies one of the most complex dry mills we have seen. Based on rice mill designs, Teddy has designed a custom dry mill for coffee, with a linear flow and home-made peaberry sorter.

From the coffee forests of the Tzeltal people, through the custom designs of a Korean missionary, and to the labs of Café Imports, this coffee's unique journey holds true to it's cup; both complex and flavorful.



Location Map

Gallery SHG Altura Chiapas - Tenejapa (GrainPro)

