

A rich story lies behind every bean of Street Roast

There are many beginnings to the story of Street Roast coffee, but one story starts on a Central Valley, Calif. farm in the 1980s where the Gleason sisters, Joey and Cassy, would pile in with seven cousins every summer.

"This is where the story gets deep," said Cassy, laughing. "It was a rite of passage for all the cousins." The farm was started by their great-grandfather, Opal Fry.

The sisters began by plucking dirt clods and rocks from the belt on a tomato harvester. As they grew older, they drove the tractor.

"It was a lot of responsibility," said Cassy. "It was hard work" Joey added, to which Cassy said,

"Very hard work." That's how they talk together: layering sentences without interrupting each other, populating the same paragraph.

"Cassy and I understand how hard the work on a farm is. And the hardship of a farmer too. It's precarious."

Which fast-forwards us to another possible beginning to the story of Street Roast – that day several years ago when a man walked in the door of a cafe where Joey was working and told her about his family's Salvadoran coffee farm, explaining how direct trade helps the grower. Joey became intrigued by this relationship: she could support ecologically sound farming conditions, get more money into the hands of the farmer, and produce high-quality, artisan coffee.

"When you go to purchase a bag of coffee, you just see a shelf-full of coffee," explains Joey. "But it makes such a difference to the farmer who is thousands of miles away on another part of earth. If you buy this coffee off the shelf, you are directly impacting this one family who is trying to rock their heritage, and support all their workers."

This launched Joey – and soon, Cassy, who moved back from New York to join her – on the business of buying coffee beans directly from farmers and cooperatives to then roast and blend as Marigold Coffee. Together they run Marigold Coffee and Buckman Coffee Factory out of Southeast Portland, where they roast Street Roast.

Marigold created Street Roast after they were approached last fall by Seth Walker of Curate.org, and Jeremy Ehn and Brenden Schild with Ideaville, who focus their marketing and branding skills on creating greater good in the community.

"We created a line of coffees that would benefit the community but that would also be a delicious product we are completely proud of on its own," explained Cassy. "Street Roast is every bit as good as our Marigold line."

Walker, Ehn, and Schild dreamed up the idea for Street Roast as a way to bolster the Street Roots' revenue stream, working with Oregon State University design interns to design bags. Because Street Roots is all about people – hundreds of Street Roots vendors meeting thousands of customers – they based three blends on lively drawings of characters, the Messenger, the Artisan and the Poet.

And every one of these blends leads to more stories. The Poet blend takes us to the Andes mountains of Northern Peru where the coffee is harvested by Finca Churupampa, a family business that began with four family members and grew to 215 producers. In a region where generations have farmed, Finca Churupampa is sustaining the coffee tradition with ecologically minded practices, creating an organic fertilizer with a composted byproduct of the coffee fruit, and working with a university in Lima to create a slow release fertilizer. They don't want coffee to just be a cash crop: they are striving for healthy forests, healthy soil, and good jobs.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIGOLD COFFEE
Marigold Coffee's Joey Gleason at the Buckman Coffee Factory where Street Roast is roasted.

When several members of Finca Churupampa visited Buckman Coffee Factory last fall, they expressed joy that their beans ultimately support Portlanders experiencing poverty and homelessness.

"It is nice that we are helping producers in Peru and Street Roots is helping people in the neighborhoods," said Lenin Tocto, general manager of Finca Churupampa, holding a copy of Street Roots.

So when you buy Street Roast coffee, you are connecting to all of this – two sisters who transformed their family farming background into a local artisan coffee enterprise that supports other coffee roasters in their cooperative space. Generations of Peruvian farmers who take care of their mountainous land – and each other.

And you are connecting to all the Street Roots vendors who are getting a hand-up from homelessness and poverty by selling the newspaper.

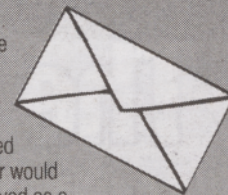
Because this is how it breaks down: All the profits go to Street Roots – \$3.33 of every pound. And every other cent? It goes to the farmers in Peru and Ethiopia and Guatemala who grow the coffee for the three blends; and to the workers at the woman-owned, local Marigold, who roast and package the coffee.

So how do you support Street Roast? Buy it as your daily coffee and as gifts when you travel. Order it as your office coffee. It's now in Powell's Bookstore on Burnside as well as on Hawthorne in the Home and Garden store; in New Seasons all around the city; in several Market of Choice locations; in Green Zebra locations on SW Broadway and North Lombard; and at Cherry Sprout Produce. Order it online at streetroast.com. If you have more locations – or if your organization would like to place a standing order – let us know. Follow us on Instagram at @StreetRoast for the latest news – including, soon, a cold brew recipe designed especially for Street Roast. And watch for another big announcement about Street Roast soon.

Buying Street Roast is one more way to sustain Street Roots – as well as a local coffee company and coffee farmers around the world. And it's really, really good coffee.

Write in

If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Executive Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, joanne@streetroots.org. We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



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By Kaia Sand

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