

Coffee Bean Varieties

Coffee Bean Varieties – Study Notes

1. Overview

- Coffee beans are the seeds of the coffee plant’s fruit (the “cherry”).
- Two species dominate global production: **Coffea arabica** (Arabica) and **Coffea canephora** (Robusta).
- Within each species, numerous cultivars (varieties) are cultivated for distinct flavor profiles, agronomic traits, and climate adaptability.

2. Major Species

Species	Common Name	Typical Altitude	Flavor Characteristics	Caffeine Content
Coffea arabica	Arabica	600–2,200?m	Sweet, nuanced, lower acidity, complex aromatics	~0.8?1.4?%
Coffea canephora	Robusta	0–800?m	Strong, earthy, higher bitterness, nutty or chocolate notes	~1.7?2.5?%
Coffea liberica (minor)	Liberica	300?800?m	Fruity, floral, “woody” after?taste, larger beans	~1.2?1.5?%

Arabica accounts for ~60?70?% of world production; Robusta supplies the remainder, especially for espresso blends and instant coffee.

3. Key Arabica Cultivars

Cultivar	Origin	Growing Region	Distinct Traits
Typica	Ethiopia ? Yemen	Worldwide (historical core)	Baseline Arabica profile; balanced acidity and body; foundation for many mutants.
Bourbon	Yemen ? Brazil	Brazil, Latin America	Higher yield than Typica; bright acidity, sweet fruit notes.

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Cultivar	Origin	Growing Region	Distinct Traits
Caturra	Brazil (mutation of Bourbon)	Brazil, Colombia, Central America	Dwarf stature ? higher density planting; crisp acidity, citrus tones.
Catuai	Hybrid (Caturra × Mundo Novo)	Brazil, Colombia, Central America	Robust, tolerant to wind & rain; medium ?full body, chocolate?nutty notes.
Mundo Novo	Brazil (natural hybrid)	Brazil, Central America	High productivity; balanced flavor with mild acidity.
Gesha (Geisha)	Ethiopia ? Panama	Panama, Ethiopia, Costa Rica	Highly aromatic; jasmine, bergamot, tropical fruit; low acidity, silky mouthfeel.
SL28 & SL34 (Heirloom)	Kenya	Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania	Strong acidity, black?currant, wine?like notes; drought?resistant.
Pacas	Colombia (mutation of Bourbon)	Colombia, Central America	Sweet, caramel?like flavor; high cup quality, good disease resistance.
Maragogipe	Brazil (mutation of Typica)	Brazil, Mexico	“Elephant” beans (large size); mild acidity, delicate flavor.

Selection Tips

- **Altitude:** Higher elevations ? slower bean development ? brighter acidity.
- **Climate resilience:** Look for disease?resistant cultivars (e.g., Catimor, Sarchimor) in regions prone to coffee leaf rust (CLR).
- **Market niche:** Specialty coffee markets prize unique aromatic profiles (e.g., Gesha, SL28).

4. Key Robusta Cultivars

Cultivar Origin Growing Region Distinct Traits