

Go grab a seat because coffee is coming

Meet the 10 winners of Algrano's first quality
and story-telling competition in Brazil!

Behind the scenes

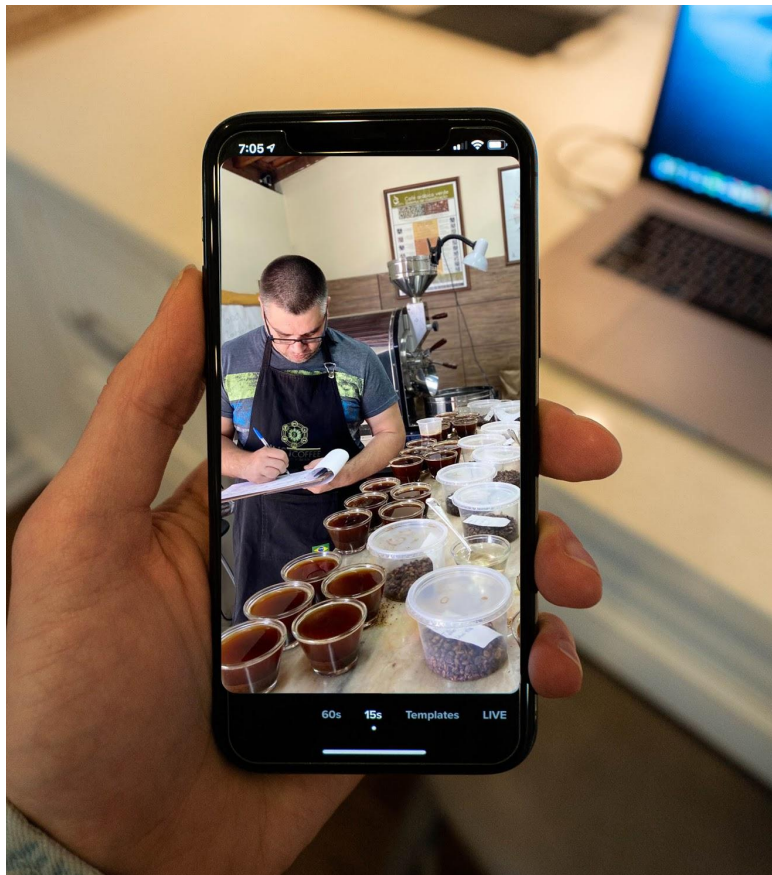
Senta que lá vem café (Go grab a seat because coffee is coming) took place in Minas Gerais, Brazil, this September to showcase the best of the season and recognize the work of the farmers who are part of the Algrano community.

The competition had two stages. In the first one, growers submitted their stories through videos and enhanced profiles on the Algrano platform. 30 growers passed to the sensory phase. We received 53 samples! They were sent to a lab in Varginha, Minas Gerais, where the selection took place from the 4th to the 6th of September.

The lots were cupped by an independent heavy-weight jury headed by Jack Robson, one of Brazil's first Q Graders and the only certified Brazilian Q Instructor! Jack was joined by Francisco Lentini Neto - Q grader, manager of Minasul's specialty coffee department and Cup of Excellence judge since 2011 - and William Batista Mariano - Q Grader, part of Minasul's QC team and judge in multiple national competitions.



Behind the scenes



From the 53 samples, 35 cupped above 86 points, the minimum score for lots to classify. The 10 winning lots were all above 87.5 point on the SCA scale!

"I have taken part in the Cup of Excellence a few times and multiple other contests and let me tell you... I don't think I have ever seen such a good selection! I mean, COE has coffees of the same caliber, mas they also receive average lots. We normally see growers trying to 'test' the judges by chancing the competition with okay lots to see if they get approved. In this contest, the absolute majority of the lots was outstanding. I was impressed. The competition was taken very seriously," said Jack Robson (photo on the left).



Behind the scenes



Jack and the jury selected the 10 best lots on September 6th at Jack's lab in the town of Varginha. We've been in conversation with the producers since then to coordinate the pricing of the lots. This is not an auction and they were free to price their lots as they wished. If normally importers snatch most lots in the Cup of Excellence auction, these lots are available for roasters only! Samples are already on the way...

The winning lots will be available to buy in Europe in **mid-October** during the **Brazilian Discovery**. Our partners at SanCoffee in Minas Gerais have provided invaluable logistical support coordinating samples and will also be responsible for exporting the lots. SanCoffee is also a key partner of Cup of Excellence in Brazil and acts as the main exporter for the lots in the auction. We are very grateful to Fabrício Andrade (left), Ana Claudia Silva and Allan Botrel (right) for the partnership!

Important dates



And the
winners
are...



1st

89.50 pts

Alessandro Hervaz, Honey Coffee Farms

Cup profile: Floral, Mango, Pineapple, Spice,
Honey, Citric, Creamy, High Sweetness & Body

Lot name: BR-313 Project AAA - Natural Acaiá

Location: Sítio Quilombo, Campanha, Mantiqueira de
Minas, MG

Variety: Acaiá

Altitude: 1400 - 1450m

Process: Natural. Manual selective picking.
Fermentation inside breathable bags for one week.
Mixed drying in thick layers on patio first and then on
African beds for 25 days in total.

Volume: 5 bags

Price: 16 USD/kg

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"This coffee comes from a farm I rent with two friends, Augusto and Ademilson. We had called the Project AAA because all our names start with the letter A but it has nothing to do with the Nespresso AAA. Maybe we need a better name... We rent a 9 hectares farm together and each of us has 3 hectares. The altitude is pretty high, ranging from 1400 to 1450m. My part has 2 varieties: Acaia, like in this lot, and a little bit of Bourbon. My best coffees come from this plot!

I like the Acaia because it tastes good in the cup and the screen size is big too. Acaia is a lineage from the Mundo Novo variety that needs a lot of care but yields well. 'Round here we call it the 'dutch belted cow of coffee'. I struggled with the variety in the beginning because the wind is strong at the AAA plot. BUT now the Acaia and I understand each other.

I started working with specialty in 2008. It was the first time I got a coffee graded. It scored 80 points. I have learned a lot since then. Augusto and I banter that specialty is like a videogame. You move from level to level. When you are a beginner you follow the rules: pick, sort, wash and start drying on the same day. Spread the coffee in thin layers on the patio, bean by bean. This helps with consistency and reduces defects. But coffee can be much better than this. When you understand what you can do to improve you move levels. I like this.

I also like helping other producers. I was the president of APAS Coffee for 7 years. I left because I didn't want to get comfortable. I wanted to expand my farm. Then I joined another cooperative, Coopervass. They needed support in the management but no one wanted to do it. I joined as a vice president of Coopervass this year and am looking for ways to improve what we do. Some say I like trouble. I just can't see things that need improving and do nothing."





Pedro & Mariana Veloso from Veloso Coffee

2nd

89.33 pts

Cup profile: Floral, Honey, Candy-like, Lemon, Citrus Peel, Creamy, High Sweetness, Lingering, Sweet Finish, Zesty

Lot name: BR-319 Lot 639/20 Red Catuaí "Passa"

Location: Paraíso Farm, Carmo do Paranaíba, Cerrado Mineiro region, MG

Variety: Red Catuaí 99

Altitude: 1000 - 1150m

Process: Mechanical picking of H2 sector, where the cherries were nearly dry on the plant, a stage we call "passa". The coffee was sundried on the patio for 10 days

Volume: 15 bags

Price: 15 USD/kg

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"My family has been involved in coffee since 1975. Back then, my father Pedro Humberto began buying and warehousing coffee to sell. He had been trading beans and corn up to that point. His decision coincided with the two frosts in the Southern state of Paraná, then the biggest producing region in Brazil, that forced growers to sell their land and move to the Cerrado area.

At the time, there were many Japanese families growing coffee in the South and the Japanese government subsidised them in buying land at Cerrado. Because of the frosts, the price of the coffee went up and my father managed to get a really good value for the stock he had. He has always been savvy with business and this was the perfect opportunity. This is how he bought the family's first farm in 1977.

Bit by bit my father grew his business by buying farms and expanding his warehouse. He has been very focused on traceability and sustainability from day 1 and our farms were the first in Brazil to become UTZ certified in 2004. It was a big investment that only started paying off (I mean financially) in 2009. We are also very active in our community, supporting orchards in the local school, local football clubs, an old people's care home and a program of our church for children in need. This year, due to COVID, we also donated a reasonable amount to the local hospital.

Veloso likes to deal directly with roasters. We do business in a serious and responsible way. We want our buyer to know who we are and we don't always get that if we work with traders. Two years ago I met a dealer who bought from us for many years and, in talking to him, I realized he didn't even know where we were! For us, communicating our history is a matter of principle. We want our family to be recognized for the work we do and we want our clients to understand how we operate. A clear example of why: transport from Cerrado to the port of Santos costs more than from South of Minas. So if our coffee is a bit more expensive, we want people to know why they are paying what they are paying."

3rd

89 pts

Cleverson Daniel from Sítio Vargem Alegre

Cup profile: Floral, Coconut, Toffee, Citric,
High Sweetness, Lingering, Vibrant Acidity

Lot name: BR-320 Yellow Catuaí Sugarcane Sector

Location: Vargem Alegre Farm, Cristina, Mantiqueira de
Minas region, MG

Variety: Yellow Catuaí

Altitude: 1150 - 1450m

Process: Natural. Manual selective picking. After sorting,
the cherries are spread thinly on African beds to dry for
30 days

Volume: 5 bags

Price: 14 USD/kg

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"Sítio Vargem Alegre is located in the town of Cristina in the Mantiqueira de Minas region, South of Minas Gerais. It is owned by my father Sebastião (photo) and my mother Hilda, but all the family is involved. My father might look serious, but he is a very open-minded and easy-going man who embraces our participation and welcomes our opinions. My brother Edu and I joined him in 2015, when I was 18 years old and Edu 16. At the time, prices were getting really low and my dad wanted to expand his commercial coffee production to tackle the price issue. My brother and I encouraged him to invest in quality instead.

I began working at the local cooperative to learn about quality control. Today I am a Q grader and also have the SCA Sensory Skills diploma. I learned a lot about preparing coffee, sampling, QC and processing since 2015. All this knowledge applied to the field has had a great impact on my family. We expanded our farms, patios and improved our post-harvest greatly. Our general quality of living has improved.

Today we have four plots: Vargem Alegre, Tarumã, São Sebastião and Nossa Senhora das Candeias. We keep going higher. Our most recent project is a coffee plantation at 1690m, where no other farmer has dared to go to. It's so cold our first experience was a disaster. The frost killed everything. BUT now we learned that the plants need to grow under the shade of trees there, protected and not exposed. People call me crazy, but I'm on to something..."





Augusto Borges Ferreira from Capadócia Coffee

4th

88.41 pts

Cup profile: Floral, Honey, Red Berries,
Red Apple, Almond, Citric, Juicy

Lot name: BR-329 Lot 02 Project AAA Fermented
Natural Acaiá

Location: Sítio Quilombo, Campanha, Mantiqueira de
Minas region, MG

Variety: Acaiá

Altitude: 1400 - 1450m

Process: Natural with anaerobic fermentation. Manual
selective picking followed by 2 days of fermentation
inside GrainPro bags and drying inside a polytunnel for
25 days

Volume: 5 bags

Price: 13 USD/kg

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"This lot comes from Project AAA, which stands for Augusto, Ademilson and Alessandro. We are three coffee mates that decided to rent a property, Sítio Quilombo in the town of Campanha, together at high altitude so we could best produce specialty grades. Alessandro and Ademilson are great friends and as enthusiastic about coffee as I am. We think about competitions all year long!"

In the first harvest of this plot, I had a coffee that scored 88. Crazy, isn't it? But, for me, it lacked acidity. I wasn't happy. One night I woke up feeling disturbed and started thinking about what I could do to improve on that. I couldn't sleep. I decided I would try fermentation in a GrainPro bag. This lot made it to the finals of the Cup of Excellence. It was the 24th best coffee! I replicated the process this year and the quality is even better. This is my best coffee of the year.

Quality is not the only reason why this coffee is special. The people I work with at the farm are also really important for the entire process. We pay our collaborators well so that they want to get better at what they do. Take Gustavo, for example. He started moving coffee on the patio 2 years ago and I pushed him to learn more. Today he knows how to roast in the IKAWA, he can create blends and cup. Danilo "Costelinha" is another young lad that operates the mechanical harvester. He earns 3 times more than the local average for the same job and is a top-notch worker!"

5th

88.25 pts

Heron De Carvalho from Fazenda Canta Galo

Cup profile: Floral, Chocolate, Mulling Spices,
Citric, Complex, Creamy, Malic

Lot name: BR-330 5th place: Canta Galo's Bóia
Anaerobic Fermentation 90h

Location: Canta Galo Farm, Campos Altos, Araxá
region, MG

Altitude: 1070 - 1230m

Process: Natural. Cherries are left to start drying on the
trees. Fermentation in barrels for 90 hours, then
washing and two-stage sun-drying on patio for up to
30 days

Volume: 5 bags

Price: 12.60 USD/kg

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"Canta Galo is my family's farm and it's located in Campos Altos, in the West of Minas Gerais. Campos Altos is not yet a certified coffee region like the Cerrado, but it has a very particular terroir and micro-climates. My farm sits in the fringes of the Atlantic forest, right where it meets the Cerrado Mineiro, near Serra da Canastra (known for its amazing cheese and soon to be known for its coffee too). We call it "the gates of Cerrado".

I grew up around coffee and always enjoyed it, but I only became a full-time farmer a few years ago when my father passed away. Before that, I was a PE teacher. It was a radical change, amplified by my father's sudden death. I had to take control of stuff quickly or, as we say it in Minas, had to "grab the ox by the horn". All my 3 siblings also had other jobs and didn't really believe in coffee. As Canta Galo was too small to split, they wanted to sell it. I insisted that we kept the farm and started investing heavily in it. And it seems like it's paying off!

Since I took over, I started improving our post-harvest protocols by making our patios better for drying. I like to do "intermittent drying", for example, and let my coffees rest in bags for 15 to 20 days when they reach 18 to 16% humidity. Then I bring the cherries back to the patio to finish drying. This process has proven really good for my conditions. So much that, when we competed last year for the first time we got 3rd place on the EMATER's (Institute of Technical Assistance and Rural Extension of Minas Gerais) contest!

Winning a competition was a great honour for my family. It got my siblings more excited to work with coffee and now my brother, who is an accountant, is looking after the farm's finances and one of my sisters is learning to taste. This union is key to keep up going strong. It is also key to allow me some spare time to dedicate to my other passion: mountain biking and radical sports. I take part in Downhill competitions since 2011! And now that the harvest season is at the end I can go back riding!"





Rafael Vinhal from Vinhal Cafés Artesanais

6th

88 pts

Cup profile: Coconut, Pineapple, Honey,
Mix of Citric, Lactic & Malic Acidities, Toffee

Lot name: BR-328 Lot 20-0020 64h Fermented FW
Topázio Fazenda Recanto

Location: Recanto Farm, Serra do Salitre, Cerrado
Mineiro region, MG

Variety: Topázio

Altitude: 930m

Process: Fully washed with double fermentation. The cherries ferment inside a big bag for 64 hours and for 36 hours in a tank with water. When the pH drops the acidity comes forward. The coffee is washed and we centrifugate the beans. We dried this coffee on raised beds for 7 days

Volume: 9 bags

Price: 12.30 USD/kg

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"This lot comes from sector 3 of Fazenda Recanto, located in Serra do Salitre town near Patrocínio, in the Cerrado Mineiro region. It is one of our two farms – the other one is called Estrela –, both Rainforest Alliance, 4C (Common Code of the Coffee Community) and Certifica Minas certified. We are also proud members of the BSCA (Brazil Specialty Coffee Association)."

Vinhal's history started with my grandfather 'Seu Zico' or Mr Zico. A charismatic figure and very kind, he was the one who sewed, with his own hands, the first coffee seeds on the soil of what today is Vinhal Cafés Artesanais back in the 80s. My father Afonso took over when Seu Zico passed away, alongside my mother Marcélia. My father is in charge of the most arduous side of the business, the management of the farms. As we say it in Brazil, he is "carrying the piano". My mother is in charge of one of the most delicate sides of the business, the post-harvest of the micro-lots.

I, Rafael, am Afonso and Marcélia's eldest son, in charge of the commercial development of the farm and our brand. We have never exported directly before and this is my main project at the moment. So much that you'll find my best and most exclusive lots, like this Fermented Topázio, on offer at Algrano this year. I am all for direct trade and fiercely against certain groups and cooperatives holding the monopoly of the coffee trade. I want to sell to roasters and know my final buyer. I also have multiple friends in coffee and hope to be able to help them in the coming years too.

Fermented Fully Washed is one of our many post-harvest processes or recipes developed in-house through many years of trial and error. Of the 300 trials we did to find the right recipe, 299 went wrong and this worked out. Do you know the recent boom in fermenting with fruits and yeasts? Been there, done that. 6 years ago or more... And don't like it to be quite frank. I think that what works best is a combination of methods and multiple fermentations using nothing but the coffee itself."

7th

88 pts

Ademir Francisco
Pereira from Sítio
Bela Vista

Cup profile: Floral, Lemon, Brazil Nut, Honey,
Bright acidity, Citric, Creamy, Full-Bodied,
Toffee

Lot name: BR-325 Red Catuaí Natural Sítio Bela Vista

Location: Sítio Bela Vista, Campos Altos, Araxá, MG

Variety: Red Catuaí

Altitude: 1070 - 1230m

Process: Natural with manual picking. Mixed drying on patio for 8 days and later on the mechanical dryer for another 3 days on low temperatures. We will wash the coffees when we need it but this year maturation was so uniform that the processing was a lot easier

Volume: 15 bags

Price: 11.70 USD/kg

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"Bela Vista is located in the town of São Gonçalo do Sapucaí bordering the town of Campanha, in the South of Minas Gerais. The altitude helps us a lot. This coffee comes from the highest part of the farm at 1270m. The air is cool and gentle. The plot is new too. We bought it 7 years ago.

Before Bela Vista, we were not full-time farmers. My father inherited a tiny piece of land (1 hectare) and we started growing coffee on it. Most of the time we were still picking at the neighbouring farms. It was only when we started harvesting our own that we became able to put some money together to expand. And now we have pickers working for us.

This year's harvest was a blast. Maturation was good and so homogenous that the pickers who work with me had a laugh. My farm is too steep for mechanical harvesters, so I always bring folks from the North of Minas Gerais to pick coffee and host them for 3 months. This year, with COVID, they all had to self-isolate when they came, but the weather was a blessing. The rain patterns were perfect, with just a little bit of rain at the end of the drying season.

When we acquired Bela Vista, we had already heard that higher altitudes were better for the quality of coffee. They are also harder to manage because of the plot inclination and they tend to produce less. That actually made them cheaper at the time. When we bought Bela Vista it was cheaper than the lower altitude plots and it was all we could afford. The irony!

I started working with specialty coffee around 2010. It was thanks to my friend Alessandro, who was the first place in this competition. At the time, he was the president of APAS Coffee. Two years after I started I gave up. I couldn't see the results and thought nothing of the project. Alessandro came to me and insisted that I carried on. That I had good coffee. 'You have to believe in it,' he said. So I did. And I'm happy about it. When I saw the results of Algrano's competition I texted Alessandro straight away. 'I owe it to you,' I said."





Ismael Andrade from Fazenda São Silvestre

8th

87.58 pts

Cup profile: Lemon, Caramel, Creamy, Bright Acidity, Citric, High Sweetness

Lot name: BR-327 GR1044/9 Yellow Icatu São Silvestre Farm Anaerobic Fermentation

Location: São Silvestre Farm, Serra do Salitre, Cerrado Mineiro region, MG

Variety: Yellow Icatu

Altitude: 1200m

Process: Natural with anaerobic fermentation. Mechanical harvesting followed by electronic sorting. Fermentation in controlled environment (monitoring pH and temperature) for 80 hours. Sun-drying in thin layers on African beds for 21 days at around 25C

Volume: 5 bags

Price: 11.30 USD/kg

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"Our history goes back to 1901 when our family started growing coffee at Capim Branco Farm in the Cerrado Mineiro region. However the brothers Ismael and Eduardo Andrade, the face of the company today, only got involved in the 1970s. At the time, they were living in Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais. They didn't work with coffee really. But it was something that was in their blood, so the decision to take over the family business was a simple one. And when they got involved they got really involved!"

Ismael was one of the member founders of the Brazilian Specialty Coffee Association (BSCA). He was always a big defender of the natural processing method. People didn't use to think naturals were specialty and Ismael disregarded that as nonsense. He was right. The BSCA has been exporting to the world the value of the Brazilian specialty movement since 1991.

São Silvestre, where this lot comes from, was bought later on, in the 2000s. It has an average altitude of 1200m, is 2 degrees Celsius cooler than the area and has a later harvest. The volcanic soils are perfect for growing Yellow Icatu, Yellow Catuaí and Red Catuaí. Mr Dito has been the farm's manager since day one. He is 60 years old and does a great job on the post-harvest level.

We are really excited to see how the quality of Brazilian coffees has been rising recently. A lot of roasters, when they visit us and we cup together, say our coffees taste like the African ones. The acidity is always upfront and shiny due to the fermentation protocols we developed. We are also seeing a lot of new developments on the ground that make us believe that there is a new wave coming and people have no idea.

Today, a lot of great micro-lots are still a matter of luck. This is changing. At São Silvestre, we don't believe in luck. We believe in science. We follow scientific protocols for our post-harvest not only because we want to be precise but also because we need to repeat the processes successfully year after year. We are getting there. Today, we can say that the sky is the limit."

9th

87.58 pts

Ademir Francisco
Pereira from Sítio
Bela Vista

Cup profile: Almond, Citric, Toffee, Caramel,
Bright acidity, Creamy, High Sweetness

Lot name: BR-326 Yellow Catucaí Natural Sítio Bela Vista

Location: Sítio Bela Vista, Campos Altos, Araxá, MG

Variety: Yellow Catucaí

Altitude: 1070 - 1230m

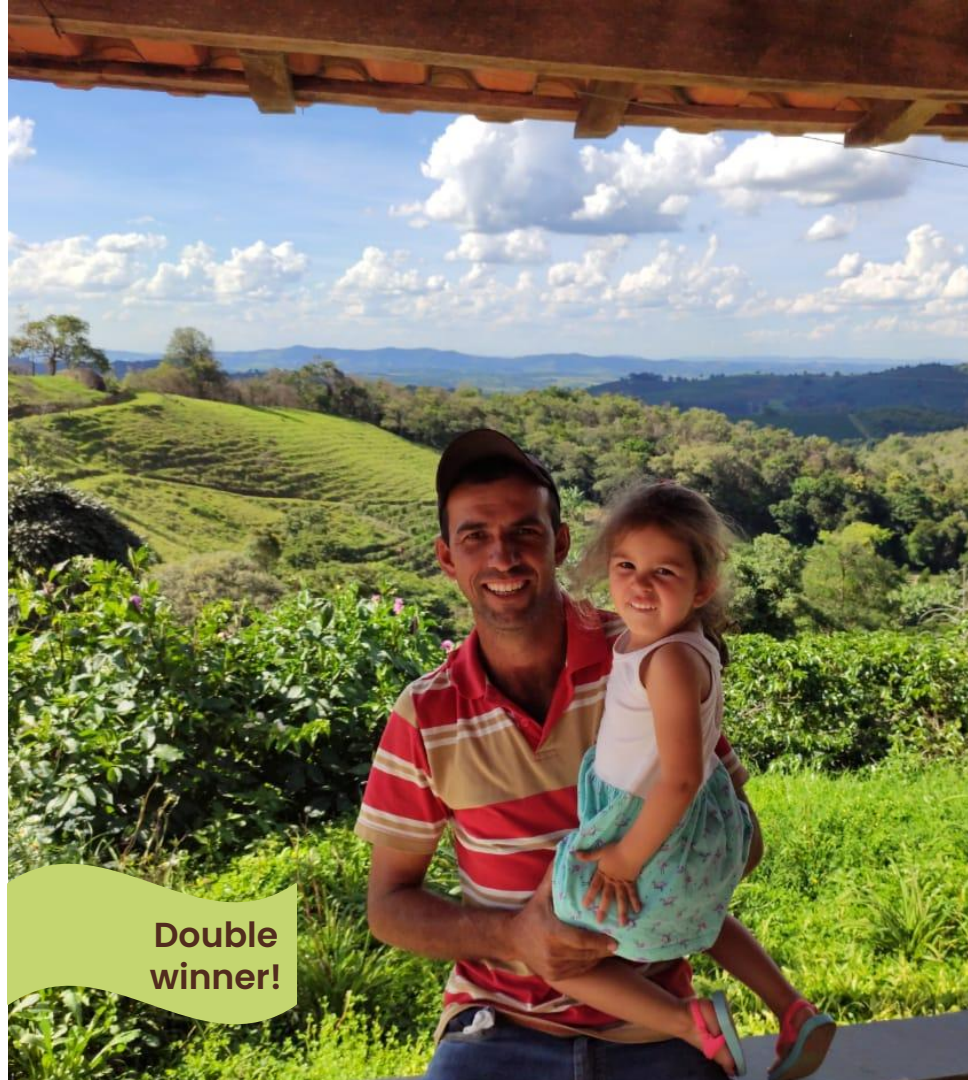
Process: Natural. Manual picking using the “derrica” or stripping method. Sun-drying on the patio for 12 days with cherries thinly spread in the first few days and in ticker layers later on, always moving the coffees every 40 minutes.

Volume: 7 bags

Price: 10.60 USD/kg

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Double
winner!





Nivaldo & Willer Arantes from Aroma da Serra

10th

87.50 pts

Cup profile: Dried fruit, Citrus Fruit, Toffee, Creamy, Double Cream, High Sweetness

Lot name: BR-323 Yellow Icatu Sector 4 Natural

Location: Chácara Nossa Senhora da Aparecida Farm, São Gonçalo do Sapucaí, South of Minas, MG

Variety: Yellow Icatu

Altitude: 1200m

Process: Natural. Mechanical harvest with machine adjusted to select the ripest cherries. Harvesting took 3 days and was followed by sun-drying on the patio for 10 days. We finished drying on the mechanical dryer for 5 days at a maximum temperature of 30 degrees Celsius

Volume: 15 bags

Price: 10.50 USD/kg

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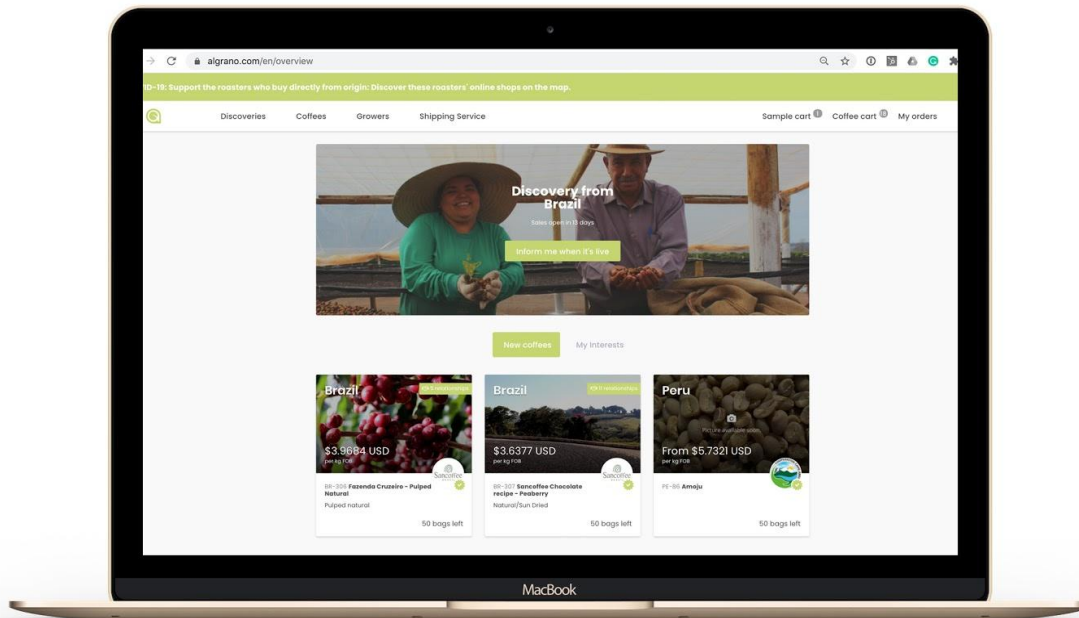
"We planted this Icatu many years ago not only because the resulting drink is good, but because it is a plant that yields well under the correct conditions. At the time, the variety was being promoted by the IBC (Brazilian Coffee Institute) for its resistance and because the fruit tended to reach its maturation peak faster than others, saving time for producers and helping to reduce costs. We were one of the first producers in the region to grow it.

This coffee is an example of the general quality our farm has been producing this year. Quality has been great! It's beautiful to look at a cupping sheet and see that your worst coffees are scoring 82, for example. The farm's average at the moment is 85! We have some low-quality contracts to honour and - it's kind of bonkers - we don't really have the amounts.

Our location and altitude are big contributors to the coffee's quality. We are on the top of a mountain chain, in a plateau in the region of São Gonçalo. We discovered our potential only 7 years ago, when we participated in our first competition. We got 3rd place, but with a twist. The 1st and 2nd places were for micro-lots of 10 or 15 bags. Our lot had 250 bags! This helped us realize we could produce high quality consistently with good volume.

Since then we have developed some relationships with roasters in Brazil and in Australia selling directly. We also have created a Coffee Club to discuss all things coffee with other enthusiasts. Coffee is a great way to meet new people and make friends! It carries a lot of recognition for the producer, unlike any other crop. Have you heard of specialty pinto beans? I haven't..."

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