



PROGRESS REPORT: **COMMUNITY 2017**

*A year-end review of our mission to engage in and lift up our communities,
at home, abroad, and throughout the global specialty-coffee industry.*



QUALITY • SERVICE • EDUCATION • PROGRESS

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CONTENT

» Reporting on Progress.....	04
Headed into 2017	05
Community Progress 2017	
• Women Coffee Producers.....	06
• Cria Carmo.....	07
• How We Buy Coffee.....	08
• Coffee Send-Back.....	10
• Resource	11
• Fiesta de Fin de Cosecha	12
• Events.....	13
• Northern Coffee Alliance.....	14
Looking Ahead.....	15



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REPORTING ON PROGRESS

At Cafe Imports, we don't simply measure success in dollar signs or number of bags sold. While those are certainly tangible measures of a degree of accomplishment for an importing company, we tend to be more holistic about business—we are as much a people company as a product company. For this reason, we are dedicated to upholding our part of the word *partnership* in every transaction that we make and every relationship we cultivate, with every link along the supply chain.

In some cases, our role within a community—either of coffee growers, or with our customers and neighbors—is purely fiscal: We pay what we believe are fair prices for the coffees we source; we offer pre-financing for improvement projects; or we contribute to social causes and efforts with an old-fashioned check, simply because we believe it's right and worthy. In other cases, our input and impact on community initiatives is not solely a matter of economics, but also emotion, engagement, and ethos: We develop sourcing programs that fit our ideals and worldview, we develop tangible ways to bring the reward of recognition back to producers, and we offer education and empowerment to farmers and roasters alike.

We love coffee, obviously: It's what we live and breathe every day, and sourcing and selling fantastic green coffee is what keeps bulbs in all of the lights and filters in the brewers at our offices. We also realize that coffee is people, and people are community: We are dedicated to supporting our global and local community as we grow, and we are happy to take this opportunity to analyze our progress in these areas over the course of 2017, as well as to set our intentions for next year.

Cafe Imports Community Progress 2017

05

HEADED INTO 2017

Our concept of "community" projects are not, strictly speaking, devoted simply to a quality of coffee, but rather to a quality of life, understanding that there can't be one without the other, period. At the beginning of the year, we were aware of several existing community-focused programs and goals, and we set our sights on maintaining and hopefully expanding several initiatives both in the coffee-growing areas and the various other locations in which we work, including our own home base of Minnesota.

When the calendar flipped over on January 1, 2017, these efforts were on all our minds and on the docket:

Women Coffee Producers program: A premium-based sourcing project that attempts to create gender equity in coffee-growing countries by buying lots of coffee specifically produced by women and offering them a price that responds to the economic disparity that women face in comparison to men worldwide. As we moved into 2017, we had existing partnerships in Colombia (AMACA), Guatemala (ASDECAFE, CODECH), Honduras (Cooperativa RAOS), Mexico (CESMACH, GRAPOS), and Indonesia (Item Reje Gayo, Ipak Bensu).

Cria Carmo: Owners' equity contributions to this youth-focused project in Brazil, initiated in 2013 by Carmo Coffees, are designed to support programs giving underprivileged urban children and teenagers access to social and athletic opportunities such as *futebol*, karate, and music classes.

Legendary Producers Tour: In 2016 we had the idea to bring producers on a kind of "origin trip" of their own, and invited a panel of innovative partners from Costa Rica, Brazil, and Mexico along with us to offer presentations and create community in a handful of U.S. cities.

Northern Coffee Alliance: Along with representatives from several other Twin Cities coffee companies, several Cafe Imports team members served on the founding committee for this coalition of roasters, cafes, and other businesses seeking to build community and find ways to collaborate.

COMMUNITY PROGRESS 2017

Stepping into a brand-new year, we knew we wanted to improve and build upon these projects, both at the source and at home...



Women Coffee Producers

We added three new sources to our Women Coffee Producers Program lineup: ASMUCAFE in Colombia, and Fazendas Serrado and Sertão in Brazil. We more than doubled the volume we purchased from our existing partners AMACA, and are starting to pursue microlot identification and selection with that association; we also visited the women several times this year,

including a few trips with roaster partners who are interested in that developing relationship. We are also working to refine and hone our parameters for the program, and are actively seeking new partnerships and cooperatives who are willing to isolate their women members' coffees to participate.



Cria Carmo

In September of 2017, during the first-ever Carmo Best Cup competition and auction in Carmo de Minas, Brazil, the Cafe Imports group of staff and roaster partners were introduced to the youth who participate in Cria Carmo, and were able to spend time witnessing firsthand the impact of those programs on the communities in and around Carmo de Minas. Cafe Imports

donates money to support the program out of owners' equity; these donations have no impact on the pricing of the coffees we source from our partners at Carmo Coffees. The program serves 230 young people aged 7–17, many of whom are the children of coffee-farm workers as well as local townspeople.



How We Buy Coffee

While we have always talked amongst ourselves about the philosophies and strategies that inform How We Buy Coffee, we realized more and more over the past 12 months that not only should we formalize our sourcing structure but also share the reasoning behind it with our customers. Our

approach to sourcing has always been farmer-focused—how can we support especially small producers while still seeking the finest coffees in the world?—but increasingly, the track we follow when negotiating contracts and communicating with our partners has been guided by one principle:

Buying better coffee means buying coffee better.

For us, this means not simply cherry-picking a farmer's best lots and forcing them to sell the rest elsewhere, but in assigning a price and traceability structure to all of that producer's bags, buying a larger percentage of it on a stratified quality scale,

and becoming a more reliable, more transparent, and more empowering partner to every producer who sells us their coffee this way. In the summer of 2017, we released a statement explaining our sourcing philosophy and its impact at the farm level: You can read more about How We Buy Coffee [here](#).

Fiesta de Fin de Cosecha

One of the most exciting ways we were able to expand our partnership circle was by celebrating the end of the Costa Rican harvest with a Fiesta de Fin de Cosecha, another element of our Resource program. For the first time, we invited the producers with whom we work in Costa Rica to join us for a party to toast to a good, if challenging, cycle this year: Weather cut the harvest season practically in half, forcing three months' worth of hard work picking and processing into something closer to six to eight weeks. Yields were also down as a result, but the quality of this year's cup speaks to the incredible work and focus these producers put into facing down a difficult situation: We were thrilled to invite our roaster customers to this party, and we brewed many of the producers' own offerings to celebrate, thanks to the Send-Back Program.



Coffee Send-Back

The supply chain is a circle, not an arrow, and we are interested in closing the circuit by connecting our partners at both ends. In 2017 we initiated a formal Coffee Send-Back project as part of our Resource program, inviting our roaster partners from around the world to literally send coffee back to the source by offering 12-ounce bags of roasted

single-origin beans to the producers who grew them. In May of 2017 we delivered coffee from 46 roasters (more than 125 pounds!) to our farmer and micromill partners in Costa Rica; in November of 2017, as this report was being compiled, we are planning a coffee send-back to a group of smallholders in Chalatenango, El Salvador.





Resource

Cafe Imports' Resource, mentioned above, has been one of our primary focuses this year, and the program was officially introduced in August 2017: Through trips, educational opportunities, coffee shares, and auction programs, we aim to be the dot connectors that bring you, our roaster friends and partners, closer to the source of your coffee in a real, meaningful, tangible, and yes, direct way. We recognize that while the buzzwords *Direct Trade* are powerful and popular in specialty coffee, for smaller roasters with limited resources and buying power, forming individual direct relationships can be daunting, difficult, and sometimes downright impossible. With our understanding of what makes a true partnership in coffee, and building

upon the strength of the relationships we have built over 25 years of buying green from producers around the world, we relish the opportunity to act as matchmakers—creating long-lasting business relationships (and often friendships) between the incredible producers and roasters with whom we work.



Events

Our dance card has been full this year! We have been busy developing, planning, and hosting an incredible number of events and educational opportunities to the specialty-coffee cultures developing in our home territories, turning up all over the U.S.A., Canada, Europe, Australia, the Middle East, and Asia with panel discussions, coffee tastings and cuppings, and other really good excuses to get together with other coffee people. Stump the Roaster, a focused panel discussion about coffee roasting, has become one of the most insightful and exciting things we do: We bring the conversation to different cities around the world and invite a diverse group of roasters—from companies big and small, with various degrees of experience—to share their experiences and opinions with a crowd of knowledge-

hungry coffee professionals from the local area. Our traveling Legendary Coffee Tours have featured cuppings, industry-boosting events, and just plain fun all over the world. We have also partnered on skillshare and community-development projects with like-minded partners like Mill City Roasters, La Marzocco, Sprudge, *Barista Magazine*, *Roast Magazine*, the Roasters and Baristas Guilds, and many, many more—all part of an effort to ensure that coffee professionals feel supported, seen, and empowered, by providing access to the resources and knowledge that will help them improve their skills and grow a commitment to the industry. We have also held more informal gatherings, coffee tastings, and even friendly competitions like Two Brews and a Lie.



Our continued participation in the Northern Coffee Alliance has resulted in the sponsoring and support of several local events, including latte-art throwdowns. In the coming year, we hope help expand the reach of this grassroots group of baristas and other coffee professionals to include the greater Northern states, and to raise the profile of the innovations and hard work taking place in specialty coffee in our (often overlooked) home region.



LOOKING AHEAD

There's always more to be done, and better ways to do what we're already doing—this is part of why we love being in specialty coffee. We at Cafe Imports are constantly seeking new and improved ways to contribute to and be an active part of the communities around us, whether we are at coffee's source or at home in our neighborhoods.

Women Coffee Producers Program: We hope to increase this program throughout 2018, adding new producer groups and sourcing more volume from our existing partnerships. We are also investigating the potential for a Women Coffee Producers–focused Resource trip, to make real connections and nurture long-term buying relationships between roasters and the women who produce these coffees.

Resource, 2018: The coming year will see an expanded curriculum of opportunities to connect with the source, including buying trips to Africa and Mesoamerica; an education-focused week of visits to coffee farms, mills, and research facilities; more chances to send coffee back; and the return of the Best Cup competition and the Fiesta de Fin de Cosecha. Get your passport ready—we want you to come with us on this wild coffee journey.

More events! More education! We are constantly looking at new ways to offer educational and community support to coffee professionals around the world, and the coming year we will be focusing our efforts on putting more roasting, sourcing, and origin educational materials out into the world for free, via our website. Be on the lookout for an in-depth video series about roasting, as well as rich media and information about coffee processing, and new coffee-variety tree, in addition to constant updates to our various Origin Pages and other specific coffee information.

Local engagement: One place where we would like to increase our participation in our local communities around our offices in Minneapolis, Berlin, and Melbourne. Working in such a global industry and traveling so much means we sometimes take our own origins for granted, and in the coming year we'd like to find ways to contribute that are a little closer to home.

We welcome your feedback, questions, and comments about the progress we've made and the work we have to do: Feel free to e-mail us at community@cafeimports.com with any suggestions or concerns you may have, or to become part of the efforts we are planning in the coming year.

