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## Colombia – Smallholders of Belen, Inzá, Cauca - Organic

<b>Farm:</b>	40 small holder farmers
<b>Varietal(s):</b>	Mostly Caturra (70%+) w/Colombia & Castillo
<b>Processing:</b>	Fully washed & dried on parabolic and raised beds
<b>Altitude:</b>	1750-2100 metres above sea level
<b>Owner:</b>	40 small holder farmers
<b>Town:</b>	Belen
<b>Region:</b>	Inzá, Cauca
<b>Country:</b>	Colombia
<b>Size of farm:</b>	2.5 hectares on average
<b>Harvest months:</b>	September-December / March-May



### Additional information:

The municipality of Inzá is located in the corner of the Department of Cauca, bordering with Tolima and Huila and looking out to the west over the Pacific Ocean. Situated on the “Macizo Colombiano” (the Colombian Plateau), which surrounds the high peaks of Tolima and Huila, the region is an important source of water and wildlife, in addition to being prime coffee growing land.

This coffee was produced by 40 smallholder coffee producers hailing from the sub-municipality of Belen. Every single micro-lot delivered was cupped and reserved due to its scoring 85 points or above by the community cupping lab, funded by Mercanta Exporting Partners, Pergamino, who are based in the Department of Antioquia. These stringent standards result in very limited quantities of this exceptional blend of 70%+ Caturra and approx 30% Variedad Colombia being made available for export. This particular group is also one of the first from the region to be an entirely organic certified coffee. An initiative aimed at certifying all producers in the region has now meant that 80 of the 250 producers that Pergamino works with are, as of 2020, now certified organic.

Cauca’s violent past, with a heavy presence of FARC guerrillas, had historically prevented the FNC (Colombia’s excellent national coffee board) and speciality-focused exporters from establishing a presence in the region. As violence has diminished, it has enabled the growers in the region to seek increased access to markets for quality, not only taking advantage of the region’s wonderful coffee-growing conditions but also the economic resource that nearby tourist destinations bring (for instance, the World Heritage Site “Parque Nacional Arqueológico de Tierradentro”).

We found out about this coffee through our good friends at Pergamino. Like all producers in Colombia, Pergamino spent many years helplessly riding the roller coaster of international coffee prices. They had to invest, year after year, in their crops without knowing what price they would secure. As the saying goes in Colombia, there were years of lean cows and years of fat cows – the former being more common than the latter. They often sold their coffee to large exporters, never understanding their unique sensory profiles, nor in whose hands it ended up for what price. When they began selling their coffee directly to importers and roasters, everything changed. When they extended the model to smallholder farmers in Antioquia, they also changed everything for them.

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Today, Pergamino works with more than 600 smallholder farmers in four Departments (Cauca, Antioquia, Huila and Nariño), and their influence continues to grow. They have developed the relationship with the communities over time, providing invaluable feedback on quality and training in quality assessment. They are committed to transparency in their partnerships with these farmers, ensuring that profit margins are clear and that value-added by quality goes directly to the producer. The premiums that Pergamino pays (and that Mercanta pays) range from 30-300% over market prices (depending on cupping score and volume). They also provide technical assistance so that farmers can continue to improve crop quality.

Specifically in Cauca, they have launched a new project with the Pillimue family in San Antonio, from the same municipality where this coffee was sourced. In order to offer upmarket access more widely in the region and to put more control in the hands of local people, the family (who has long supplied coffee to Pergamino from their various family member farms) has opened a small warehouse and cupping lab with funding from Pergamino. They act as logistics and sourcing partners and are able to provide quality assessment services for nearly 150 families in the area, which is far more impactful than any other regional association in the area, reaching not just San Antonio, but now also the towns of Belen, La Palmera, Aguablanca, Pedregal, Palmichal, San Jose and Santa Teresa. Most importantly, the Pillimue/Pergamino partnership enables more families than ever before to access higher prices by placing coffee on the speciality market.

During the harvest season, Pergamino has committed to monthly visits to the group in order to cup and advise on quality. All coffee produced by the group that cups at 84+ points will be purchased. 84 scoring coffees will be added to the municipality (Inza) lot, 85 scoring to the sub-municipality (Belen) lot and higher scoring lots may be held aside as micro-lots to be marketed under the farmer/family's own name.