

GATOMBOYA AA

2017 RESERVE LOT OFFERING

COUNTRY	KENYA
REGION	NYERI
COOPERATIVE	BARICHU
WASHING STATION	GATOMBOYA
VARIETIES	SL28 AND SL34
ELEVATION	1,600-1,800 MASL
PROCESSING	WASHED
HARVEST SEASON	DECEMBER-FEBRUARY



There are many coffee professionals who consider Kenya to be the undisputed king of specialty coffee. While we aren't comfortable labeling any one producing region as the best or our favorite, we have to admit that we, too, have a slight infatuation with Kenyan coffees.

In the 1930's the Kenyan government commissioned Scott Laboratories to do some work identifying, crossbreeding and cataloging coffee varieties. Botanists crossbred different mutations of Bourbon, Mocha and Yemeni Typica on a mission to find a coffee that was delicious, high yielding and disease resistant. SL-28 and SL-34 were (and still are) the most popular varieties to come out of this research. SL-28 is a French Mission (Bourbon), Mocha, Typica hybrid and SL-34 is a French Mission (Bourbon) mutation. Combine these carefully selected genetics with excellent, acidic loam soil and a unique washed processing method that includes two stages of fermentation and a final soak, with the coffee being washed in between each step, and you set the stage for producing some of the world's cleanest and most unique coffees.

In Kenya, a "lot" is made from a larger batch of coffee that is delivered to the dry-mill from a cooperative or estate on a given day. When a delivery arrives at the mill, it is processed (hulled), analyzed (technically and sensorially), screened (separated according to bean size) and given an outturn-number.

Within the leathery skin of the coffee fruit two seeds can typically be found. These seeds are, of course, what we roast, grind and prepare as coffee. Competing for space, the two seeds contained within one round cherry force each other to develop with one flat side. The flat sides rest against each other while the opposite sides develop rounded. Occasionally (roughly 5% of the time) only one seed develops within the cherry. Without another seed competing for space, this single bean develops in a round, pea-like, shape. Kenyan specialty coffee lots are typically from one of three screen sizes: AA, AB or PB. AAs are flat beans with screen size 18+, ABs are flat beans with screen sizes 16 and 17 (16, 17 and 18 here refer to 64ths of an inch). PBs are the aforementioned singular, round, peaberries. Though it was long believed that bean size correlated to quality, we at Passenger, after many hundreds of blind tasting sessions, do not believe this to be the case. While qualities certainly vary from screen size to screen size, quality itself does not follow any sort of expected relationship with bean size.

IN THE CUP

A classic Nyeri profile, this 2017 AA lot from Gatomboya possess heightened sweetness and acidity. The fruited qualities are reminiscent of fresh raspberry and blackcurrant (a tasting note fairly unique to Kenyan coffees), underpinned by a plush nougat-like quality.

THE TAKEAWAY

Many of our favorite coffees come from Kenya. Many of those coffees come from Nyeri County in the Central Province of Kenya. The acidic loam soil, plant genetics and processing interact in unimaginable ways that when grown, processed, roasted and prepared properly, create a cup that is at once balanced and extreme. Elegant and powerful.

