



Speciality Coffee

Katrien Pauwels / Author

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1. Overview

The book "Speciality Coffee" explores the realm of specialty coffee. It discusses the various definitions of specialty coffee as well as tracing the journey of coffee from beans to cups. Specialty coffee is important as it is a rapidly expanding segment within the coffee market. Nowadays, beyond consuming coffee as a common means of caffeinating, a significant number of coffee drinkers seek new experiences of coffee taste and appreciate stories behind the coffee they consume. The term specialty coffee refers to the quality of the final cup as well as the transparency and the dedication of people involved in every link of the coffee supply chain. In turn, the price of specialty coffee is significantly higher than coffee in general. Coffee producers could generate higher income from specialty coffee which improves their economic standing. For coffee drinkers, they would enjoy the exquisite flavors while appreciating the story that accompanies each cup. This book contains a comprehensive spectrum, covering details from coffee cultivation to the art of consumption. It caters to both coffee producers seeking knowledge about specialty coffee and coffee drinkers eager to expand their understanding of this coffee segment.

2. About The Author

The author of the book, Katrien Pauwels, is a pioneer in the realm of specialty coffee in Belgium. In 2001, when the global specialty coffee trend was still emerging and relatively uncommon

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in her home country, Pauwels embarked on a personal mission to introduce specialty coffee to Belgium. This journey led her to travel to the coffee-growing regions, where she witnessed the entire process of coffee bean cultivation, processing, roasting, brewing, and ultimately, the enjoyment of a freshly brewed cup of coffee by the consumers. Powels co-founded "OR Coffee Roasters," the only specialty coffee roaster in Belgium at that time, directly sourcing a third of its coffee beans from their place of origin. Furthermore, she played a pivotal role in establishing the "OR Coffee School," a training center offering specialized courses on coffee brewing and service (OR Coffee Roasters, 2022). In this book, Pauwels imparts her wealth of knowledge and insights into specialty coffee. The content is brought to life through a well-illustrated layout, and captivating photographs by Wim Kempenaers.

3. Review

This book provides content on essential aspects of specialty coffee throughout the coffee supply chain. The content is divided into 5 sections, each exploring a different stage: cultivating coffee, coffee roasting, making coffee, coffee business, and finally, the act of savoring coffee. One of the key messages conveyed throughout the book is the significance of collaboration and commitment among all participants in the coffee supply chain. It highlights the essentiality of maintaining unwavering standards, pursuing excellence, and fostering sustainability from the very beginning until the final cup is served. The author emphasizes that achieving true "speciality" status requires the dedicated efforts of passionate individuals who consistently strive to deliver the best possible coffee while respecting each link in the chain. The author employs a writing technique that stimulates the readers' interest to explore the multifaceted world of specialty coffee through this book.

The first section is dedicated to the cultivation of coffee, the author provides a comprehensive explanation of various coffee plants and species. A particular focus is placed on the factors that profoundly influence the flavor of coffee, such as altitude and the fertility of the plantation. It is widely acknowledged that coffee grown at higher altitudes tends to exhibit superior taste profiles. The book enhances this understanding by including visually enticing pictures showcasing the potential flavor variations that emerge when coffee is grown at different altitudes. Moreover, this section introduces the various methods used to process coffee beans. By imparting this knowledge, the book enables the readers to decipher and appreciate the nuances associated with different coffee bean processing methods.

The second section focuses on the art of coffee roasting. The author elaborates on fair-trade practices between the coffee roasters and the farmers. Fair-trade emphasizes the sourcing of good quality coffee beans from a particular region while prioritizing the well-being of local communities and ensuring fair pay for farmers. This ethical aspect is a vital component of what makes coffee "special." This section also introduces the important word "cupping" or coffee tasting. A certified cupper is called a q-grader. Technically, the q-grader tastes various coffees and assesses them by awarding points for each category such as aroma, flavor, aftertaste, and balance. The coffee awarded 80 points and above (out of 100 points) is classified as a specialty coffee. The book includes a coffee taster's flavor wheel and a cupping form in which cuppers around the world refer to when identifying technical description of a coffee's flavor. The flavors are, for instance, whiskey, lemon, and cinnamon. This part provides a tangible and measurable definition of specialty coffee, making it particularly useful for readers seeking a clear understanding of what constitutes specialty coffee.

The third section discusses two types of coffee making process: filter coffee and espresso. Filter coffee or so-called slow brew is about making coffee without using a machine. The proper slow brew results in decent quality coffee. The book elucidates the parameters that influence the flavor profile of filter coffee such as temperature, the degree of grind, and the filter apparatus employed. From this part, the readers would learn how to brew fine filter coffee. Regarding another coffee making process, usage of espresso machine is advised for a coffee bar that needs to serve the customer quickly and precisely. Description and illustrations on how to brew espresso are well presented. With the provided practical tips and techniques, the book equips readers with the knowledge needed to master the art of coffee brewing, whether it be filter or espresso process.

The coffee business is the focus of the fourth section. The author shares her personal story of how she started her coffee business along with a firsthand account of the challenges and triumphs that come with such an endeavor. This personal story adds a relatable element to the section, engaging readers on a deeper level. She also provides suggestion on the fundamental concerns to start the business including identifying the type of coffee, deciding who would be the target customer, selection of location, establishing philosophy of the business, and writing up a business plan. The critical point is to plan with worst, good, and best-case scenarios to avoid being too optimistic toward starting the business. This approach is important as it guards against overly optimistic assumptions and helps entrepreneurs prepare to ensure a more resilient and sustainable business venture.

The last section is about drinking coffee. The author reviews espresso-based drinks and their unique names which vary based on the proportion of espresso, water, and milk, as well as the specific

preparation steps involved. The book provides color photos of the coffee drinks with concise descriptions. This section is useful for both the coffee drinkers and the barista to understand the meaning and preparation of each coffee menu. Many coffee bars add these pictures to their menu so that the customers understand the coffee drinks served. This not only enhances the overall customer experience but also serves as a testament to the significance of visually communicating the richness and diversity of coffee offerings.

4. Conclusion

The strength of this book lies in its ability to cater to diverse audiences. The book not only provides fundamental knowledge about specialty coffee, covering essential aspects from beans to cups, but it also fosters an appreciation for the people involved throughout the entire supply chain. For coffee producers, this book provides valuable insights into understanding the preferences and desires of coffee drinkers. It allows them to align their practices with consumer expectations. Whereas coffee drinkers will discover the interesting stories behind the coffee they consume, deepening their appreciation for the art and craft of coffee production. Readers can expect to gain practical knowledge from the author's first-hand experiences. It is inspiring to learn from a passionate coffee lover who immersed herself in the entire coffee supply chain and had a will to share her authentic expertise with the readers. Although the book predominantly focuses on the European markets and coffee beans from Africa and South America, the knowledge and principles discussed can be applied in other regions as well. Overall, this book serves as an indispensable guide to specialty coffee. After all, this book accomplishes its objectives of sharing knowledge on speciality coffee as well as allowing the readers to appreciate the passions of people involved.

5. References

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