

**Third Time's A Charm:
Specialty coffee cupping from El Salvador and Guatemala
thrives despite COVID-19**
October 2, 2020

Ever since COVID-19 arrived in the Netherlands and made headway, everyone suffered its consequences not only from the illness caused by the virus, but also from suspensions of highly anticipated events. In fact, the Bilateral Chamber of Commerce El Salvador-Holland and the Latin American Trade Agency, in their quest to introduce spectacular Central American coffees, had invited premium roasters in the Netherlands to a coffee cupping for March 20, where they could appreciate and evaluate those beans for their purchase.

Then COVID-19 came and the cupping was reprogrammed for the 4th of September. An yet again, right when everything was prepared for that date, the chief cupper that was subcontracted for the technical organization of the event canceled the cupping.

Given all the challenges that the organizers had faced for making this event a reality and more than half a year of patiently waiting and preparing, finally holding it this past October 2 in Amsterdam, on the third attempt. It was like a dream come true for Sonia Meijer, President of the Bilateral Chamber of Commerce El Salvador-Holland, and Paul Dufour, Director of the Latin American Trade Agency.

And they had every reason to feel that way. Representatives of interested coffee firms that attended this event, which was coordinated technically by cupper Ed Krijgsman, showed much satisfaction about the broad range of beans presented, as they had 27 options to choose from and offer according to the diverging tastes of their clients.

El Salvador and Guatemala represent origins of some of the most highly appreciated coffees in the world, due to their exquisite and complex flavors. To produce these exclusive beans, natural elements such as the climate and soil composition are perfectly intermingled with cultural practices as the crop grows and is harvested in the farm, after which it is finally processed. These elements, encapsulated in the concept of terroir, together with the numerous varieties that are cultivated with love and devotion by farmers that work day after day in El Salvador and Guatemala, give rise to literally thousands of possible flavor profiles that amaze any enthusiast.

The 27 samples displayed at this cupping, including varieties such as the bourbon, icatu, pacamara, caturra, catimor and pacas, embodied the rich diversity of this crop from the Central American countries. These beans – grown in different regions of these countries that are small but replete with distinct micro-climates, and with diverse processing methods such as washed, natural and honey – seduced the participants, each with its own unique appeal.

In the end, some beans, like the spectacular natural Geisha offered by the cupper and representative of several Central American coffees José Yamagiwa, attracted everybody's attention with its strikingly complex high intensity fruity notes. But in the end, every participant had his or her own favorite coffee that will in turn captivate coffee lovers in the Netherlands as they savor it from their cup.

COVID-19 forced this event to finally be held at the third attempt. But these exceptional Salvadoran and Guatemalan coffees needed only one chance to convince the pros of their outstanding worth – and they did so on a very high note.