

FEATURE

Filipino Coffee Grower Among World's Best

By Caroline Julian

Nestled in the Ka'u District near the town of Pahala on the Big Island is a small farm that has earned a big and distinguished award for its coffee.

"We were acknowledged as being one of the best roast coffees in the world," says Ruby Javar, owner of Ruby & Amy Javar Farms. "Last year we were semifinalists in the Coffee of the Year competition. It is always an honor to receive recognition from Specialty Coffee Association of America."

The SCAA is the world's largest coffee trade association dedicated to creating a vibrant specialty coffee community.

About 370 different coffees were represented at this year's competition, which was held in Atlanta. The 8,000-plus coffee aficionados in attendance each cast their ballot. In the end, Javar's coffee had placed tenth best in the world.

The award essentially places Hawaii on the map for its java. Previously, Hawaii java was not given much of a chance in the roast competition. Javar was encouraged by the legendary Diedrich family, who thought their coffee was up there with the best, and by Master Roaster Dan Tang—a close friend and 2009 Roaster World Finalist.

"Usually you hear about Ethiopian and Kenyan coffees," Javar says. "We feel that all Hawaiian coffee has the potential to be great. What makes ours special is the time and care we put into bringing out the best



Ka'u coffee growers Ruby and Amy Javar display their gourmet coffee beans

in our coffee. It comes down to really knowing and caring for your crop, harvesting the right cherries and making sure it is processed and roasted well.

"The true test is how it cups. By doing this, we try to achieve a taste profile that delights even the most distinguishing of connoisseurs," says the native of Pangasinan, Philippines.

This year's entry took about a year to perfect.

"We transformed our backyard into a testing lab and experimented with different farming techniques," Javar says. "We are also trying to see if small changes in our farming techniques, varieties of coffee and processing had any impact on the final product. Of course it doesn't stop there because you still have to bring out the best of the coffee's attributes when you roast it.

"We have also helped our fellow farmers by teaching them some of the things we have learned so that they too can improve their crops," adds

Javar, whose family has established a history of farming roots in Ka'u since 1908.

"You can say we know this place pretty well. Our family has been here for several generations," he says.

A coffee farmer for about six years, Javar started his agricultural career assisting with the planting and processing of crops at the Ka'u Sugar Company, where he worked for about 28 years.

Following retirement, finding his niche crop didn't come right away. But the couple eventually found their green thumbs in growing coffee.

"We tried our hand in a number of vegetables and grew a number of crops including tomatoes, string beans, sweet potato, green onion, peanut and taro. We even had 5 acres planted in aloë," Javar says.

"Other farmers were also getting into the coffee business so we learned what we could at the time and started. It has been a constant learning process since then.

"We found that growing coffee interested both of us. We also find it rewarding to help our fellow farmers by showing them how to process their coffee and helping them to find buyers."

Javar and his 10 employees are busiest during the peak season, which starts in October and ends in April.

"We then harvest coffee cherries at their ripest. From that point on, we work with our sister company Pavaraga to wet process, dry mill and distribute our coffee. Then it is profession-

ally roasted prior to shipment to our customers," he says.

Roasted and marketed by Pavaraga, a gourmet coffee distributor, Javar's coffee is currently being sold by one of the mainland's most famous roasters and Lifetime Achievement Winner (in coffee), Martin Diedrich of Kean Coffee.

But people can get a taste of his prime java at Alan Wong's Restaurant and Nayong Filipino Cafe on Oahu; KTA Superstores on the Big Island and soon several more supermarket chains across the islands.

Their coffee also comes in flavored versions such as Macadamia Nut, Chocolate Haupia, or regular roast in Premium, Private Reserve or Championship Grade.



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