



SIERRA

Enjoy | The Green Life

By Avital Binshtock

A Sustained Buzz

Like your coffee tasty and eco-friendly? Five experts filter their favorites.

The coffee industry needs to wake up and smell itself. As it profits from the global caffeine jones, many of the biggest producers continue to buy beans from growers who slash rainforests and exploit workers. With that in mind (and steaming cup in hand), Sierra invited top coffee experts to recommend their favorite ethical brands. We imposed two rules: They could only pick growers, importers, or roasters with clear planet-positive practices, and they couldn't push any products in which they have a financial stake.



DOUG WELSH is the chief taster, purchaser, and blender at [Peet's Coffee and Tea](#), a Bay Area-based chain that operates the nation's first gold-certified LEED roasting facility and has been crafting artisan coffee since 1966.

"Sebastopol, California's **TAYLOR MAID FARMS** uses smokeless, energy-efficient roasting machines, hand-manufactured locally. Its community-funded stores guarantee local

investors an 8 percent return and employees a living wage. Their beans come in reusable, recyclable steel cans. Refill one with Don Oswaldo (\$10.75 for 10 oz.), a Rainforest Alliance- and organic-certified product from a Colombian farm that boasts a bird-research center. The brew, from heirloom typica beans, is beautifully sweet and balanced with nuanced flavor."



MICHAELE WEISSMAN wrote *God in a Cup: The Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Coffee* (Wiley, 2008), about how coffee gets from Third World farm to First World cup. She lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

"**COUNTER CULTURE COFFEE** makes Kuta (\$10.35 for 12 oz.), which is from Papua New Guinea's Waghi Valley and is my current favorite

coffee. This syrupy, rich bean tastes of chocolate and cherries, pairing power with a surprising clean finish. On the mouth it feels like a long, slow dance on a hot summer night. Kuta grows on small, heavily shaded highland farms in some of the richest unadulterated soil amid almost unimaginable biodiversity. Committed to organics and fair labor practices, the company, based in Durham, North Carolina, is creating a market for responsibly grown, world-class specialty coffee."

ROHAN MARLEY is Bob Marley's son and the cofounder of [Marley Coffee](#), which sells organic shade-grown coffee from offices in Jamaica, Los Angeles, and Vancouver.



"Vancouver's [CUPPAJOE COFFEE](#) is a great model for an ecofriendly company. Their Sumatra Takengon Organic (\$15.75 for 16 oz.) city roast from Indonesia is produced by the Gayo Organic Coffee Farmers Association, a multiethnic co-op that has renovated local mosques, developed a savings program, and constructed houses for Javanese refugees. The

flavor has a velvety richness and a full body while maintaining a clean, sweet nature. Classic Sumatra earthiness is accompanied by notes of fruit and smoky hints of spice and cocoa."

DANIELE GIOVANNUCCI is one of the world's leading organic-coffee experts. He is a



former consultant to the World Bank and a cofounder of the **Committee on Sustainability Assessment**, a global consortium that evaluates ecological initiatives. He lives near Philadelphia and has written several industry reports, including *The State of Sustainable Coffee*.

"Coffee should embody a commitment to the environment and social justice. And it should taste great. A current favorite: Serpentes Allegres (\$14 for 12 oz.), from a Brazilian farm that

converted to organic and started social programs. It's available from an extraordinary group called the [ORGANIC COFFEE CARTEL](#), which gives 51 percent of its profits to charities that support farmers. Nobody takes a salary. The Serpentes Allegres has sweet pipe-tobacco aromatics, allspice notes, a viscous body, and a buttery finish."

LINDSEY BOLGER is the director of coffee sourcing at Vermont's [Green Mountain Coffee Roasters](#). *Gourmet Retailer* magazine named her one of the 25 people who shaped the specialty-coffee industry. She sits on the Cup of Excellence jury and works with farmers and coffee-producing communities to improve their products and develop sustainable growing practices.



"One of the most impressive sustainable coffee operations I've seen is **SELVA NEGRA** (\$10.85 for 16 oz.), in the mountains just north of Matagalpa, Nicaragua. The owners are on the cutting edge of sustainable production yet are constantly in search of new methods. Coffee rows are mulched with algae from local ponds. Natural pest controls are made with chilies and soapy water. Coffee-processing water goes to a biodigester, where the methane gas it produces is used for cooking. Their efforts are evident in the quality of their beans, which have cane sugar aromatics followed by notes of caramel and baker's chocolate. A zip of orange zest enlivens the vanilla-custard body and clean finish."

Coffee photos: Courtesy of Peet's Coffee & Tea, Trish Rothgeb, courtesy of Rohan Marley; Ashley Tappan-Giovanucci, Brett Simison; used with permission

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