

## What Gives Life to Coffee is its Aroma

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### Summary

Genuine mocha coffee has been called the “queen of aroma” due to its dignified sweet and spicy nuances.

The extracted color has a shiny red sheen and this somehow reminds us of wine flavor. What is the secret to its differences from other coffee? To find an answer to this question, I have repeatedly made trips to the root countries for coffee, the Yemen and Ethiopia.

A hint is offered by the fact that Islam culture prohibits drinking alcohol, but leaving that for the time being, what surprised me first in those countries was the spice culture at the base of their daily life. I had foolishly overlooked it, but Yemen was a staging post in the incense trade from the time before Christ. It later functioned as an important port of call for transit from South East Asia and the Indian Ocean where spices and condiments were produced, on the route to Europe from the Middle Ages through to modern times.

Botanists have proposed that the first coffee trees were native to the Kaffa district in the south-west of Ethiopia. The basis is the many subspecies and variants found in this area, and the fact that local tribes call coffee by a number of different names (buno, kari, gia, tika, etc.).

However, coffee was initially used only for incantations.

According to “Argument in favor of the legitimate (1587)” by Abd-Al-Kadir, a scholarly Muslim Clerk or Mufti, Aldabhani in Aden introduced drinking coffee to the public in 1454. He had learned about the powers of coffee during a trip to Ethiopia. When he returned to Yemen, he became sick and, remembering coffee, tried it and not only regained his health but also learned that it could drive away sleepiness so that he could better concentrate on prayers during the night divine services. Qahwah, an anti-sleeping drink, thus became popular all over Yemen. Coffee was initially made by decocting the fruits, including the skins (flesh), and this gradually changed so that it came to be divided into incrustation qishr (coffee husks) and bunn (coffee seeds).

The Yemenites, a farming people, selected qishr that requires freshness, and the Bedouin, a desert people, selected seeds (bunn) that can be stored. They came to roast qishr or bunn, add spices, decoct and drink.

For the Empire of Ottoman Turks who aspired to rule the whole world in those days, coffee must have been indispensable for their long expeditions because it was the source of a number of spices (cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and others) overcoming tiredness and going strength. To cope with

the increasing demand, coffee merchants made up for shortages by stimulating planting in the Yemen and other parts of Ethiopia. From these beginnings, coffee produced in Yemen and Harar Ethiopia has earned the distinction of being the crown of mocha.

The cause of the “spicy aroma” of genuine mocha that I saw with my eyes in a wholesea market in Sanna, the capital of Yemen, is the threshing process using a stone mill in a time-honored fashion. The flesh of coffee naturally dried in the sun contains a lot of sugar. Combined with oil with oozing out from the seeds under the pressure of the stone mill, a unique spicy and sweet aroma is given to raw beans.

All things struggle for life in dynamically changing time space. When we taste a cup of coffee, the aroma brings us essential vitality to better achieve our aims.