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COLLABORATION

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PIONEERING BEAN MERCHANTS **DISCOVER**

THE GOOD ROAST

Babalwa Shota discovers that good
coffee starts with a fair deal →



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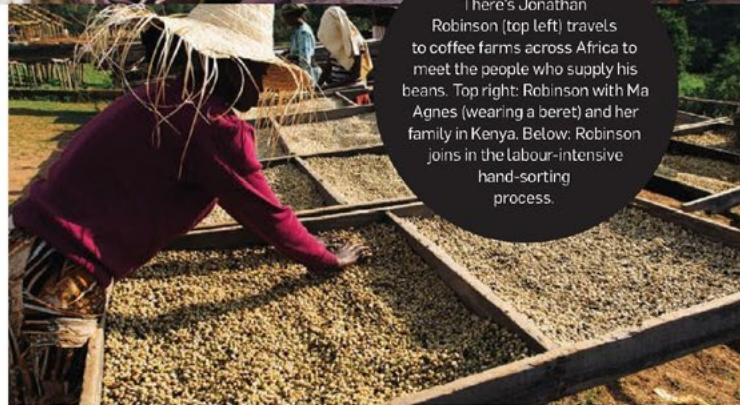
DISCOVER PIONEERING BEAN MERCHANTS



Top left: Bean There's Jonathan Robinson (top left) travels to coffee farms across Africa to meet the people who supply his beans. Top right: Robinson with Ma Agnes (wearing a beret) and her family in Kenya. Below: Robinson joins in the labour-intensive hand-sorting process.

It must have been quite something to see - a homely aunty in deep rural Kenya enjoying Batman cartoons in her lounge with a bespectacled coffee roaster from South Africa, reclining on her plump almost-new couches, savouring world class coffee that literally grows in her backyard.

This is how Jonathan Robinson describes his last visit to Ma Agnes' coffee farm in Ruthagati, about 65 km south of the Equator in the foothills of Mount Kenya. And this, he says, is what ignites his fire and makes his work worthwhile. Robinson is the founder of Bean There, South Africa's first roaster of Fairtrade-certified coffee. Ma Agnes is the small-



scale coffee farmer he has been sourcing from for more than a decade.

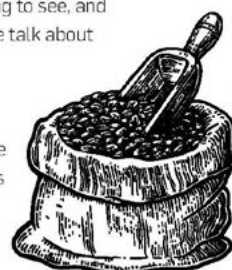
'When I started visiting Ma Agnes, her life was very different. On my last visit, she had two cows and a brick house with gutters. We sat on her couches and watched television because she now has electricity; she even has an iPhone! She has taken control of her own life through coffee. That is really exciting to see, and it's what we mean when we talk about Fairtrade,' says Robinson.

The Fairtrade label is 'a simple way to make a difference to the lives of the people who grow the things

we love. We do this by changing the way trade works through better prices, decent working conditions and a fair deal for farmers and workers in developing countries.'

Robinson says he started Bean There because he loves coffee. 'But I also wanted to impact the lives of small-scale producers in Africa. Most people didn't

know what Fairtrade was when we started 12 years ago, but now most are aware of it as a concept, which is simply about paying farmers fairly for their product. We do Direct Fairtrade, meaning that we →



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have a relationship with the producers of our coffee. Every year, I visit our communities to make sure that the money is getting to the farmers instead of getting sucked up in bureaucracy. We also want to buy from the same communities every year so that we can develop long-term relationships so that we can see change. With some farmers, you see the impact and with others you see dramatic change, as with Ma Agnes.'

The communities Robinson refers to are small-scale farms in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and the DRC, where the company sources single origin coffee for its three roasteries in Joburg and Cape Town.

The company lives by a five-point ethos that sees it strive to not only trade fairly, but also be kinder to the environment by reducing its carbon footprint through dealing strictly with African origin coffee.

'Bean There is about single origin African coffee, exceptional high quality, optimum

Robinson and his team believe their coffee is imbued with a sense of adventure - because it's sourced from the most remote spots in Africa

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roast (which is a method we employ when roasting the beans), fair trade and a sense of adventure because we go to the most remote spots on the continent and come out with incredible coffee,' says Robinson, who lobbies against the exploitation of small-scale farmers in under-developed

and developing countries.

Educating the consumer is as critical as paying fair prices to farmers which is why Bean There hosts cupping workshops (coffee tastings) and coffee and chocolate pairings led by Cuth Bland, one of four Quality Coffee Graders in the country. ■

