

How to Taste — The 60-Second Start

Welcome — this is your free digital edition of the *Coffee Tasting Journal*. The full journal follows this page. Before your first cup, learn the ten movements of the SCA cupping protocol — the global benchmark for specialty coffee. Learn them once, and every coffee you ever taste has a language.

93°C

WATER

4 min

CRUST BREAK

70°C

SLURP TEMP

100

POINT SCALE

- 01 **FRAGRANCE** Smell the dry grounds right after grinding. Note intensity and character.
- 02 **AROMA** Add the hot water. Smell the crust before breaking it; record the wet aroma.
- 03 **BREAK** After four minutes, break the crust with a spoon and inhale the released gases.
- 04 **SLURP** At 70°C, aspirate loudly — it spreads the coffee across your whole palate.
- 05 **ACIDITY** Note the brightness. Is it pleasant — citric, malic — or harsh?
- 06 **BODY** Assess the weight: from thin and light to full, heavy, syrupy.
- 07 **BALANCE** Do the attributes complement one another? Note anything dominating or missing.
- 08 **SWEETNESS** Evaluate the overall sweetness impression — present, clean, complex.
- 09 **AFTERTASTE** How long does the finish last? Clean and lingering — or off?
- 10 **OVERALL** The holistic score: your preference, and the cup's total experience.

“Slurp loudly. It is not rude — it is the instrument working.”

CUPPER'S RULE N° 1

THEN LOG IT

The guided tasting logs at the back of this journal give every cup its own full page — origin, brew, flavor notes, and your score out of 100.

“Every cup carries a story — know its roots.”

SIX ROWS CAFÉ · HOUSTON, TEXAS

SIX ROWS

— COFFEE & CACAO —

COFFEE TASTING JOURNAL

Six Rows

Coffee Tasting Journal — Diaspora & Origin Edition

“Every cup carries a story — know its roots.”

A BRAND OF VK CAPITAL VENTURES INC. HOSPITALITY
BOUTIQUE BLACK-OWNED HOSPITALITY · HOUSTON, TEXAS

THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO

TASTER NAME

HOME CITY / NEIGHBOURHOOD

FAVOURITE COFFEE ORIGIN

PREFERRED BREW METHOD

JOURNAL STARTED

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Keep this journal beside your brewer. Taste slowly, write honestly, and let every origin teach you something about where coffee — and all of us — come from.



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01 — THE STORY

The Coffee Diaspora



ROASTED AT ORIGIN — THE BEAN BEFORE THE JOURNEY

ETHIOPIA — THE BIRTHPLACE

Coffee's story begins in the Kaffa region of Ethiopia, where legend tells of Kaldi, a goat herder who discovered energizing red berries around 850 CE. Ethiopia remains the world's genetic center of coffee diversity.

Varieties like Yirgacheffe, Sidama, and Harrar carry centuries of wild, indigenous flavor — coffees that taste of jasmine, bergamot, and blueberry because they were never bred to taste of anything else. And in Ethiopia, coffee is never merely a drink. The Jebena ceremony — beans roasted, ground, and brewed in a clay pot, poured in three rounds and shared — is a spiritual act of community and welcome, performed daily for a thousand years.

Every specialty coffee on earth descends from these highlands. To taste an Ethiopian coffee attentively is to read the first page of the whole book.

01 — THE STORY

Qahwa & the Crossing

THE ARAB WORLD — QAHWA CULTURE

By the 15th century, Sufi monks in Yemen's monasteries were brewing *qahwa* for nighttime devotions, and Yemen's port city of Mocha became the world's first coffee trading hub. The word “coffee” itself derives from the Arabic *qahwa*. Coffeehouses — *qahveh khaneh* — spread across Cairo, Istanbul, and Mecca as centers of intellectual life: places where news, poetry, chess, and politics moved as freely as the cup.

THE TRANSATLANTIC PASSAGE

Colonialism forcibly moved coffee — and the enslaved African laborers who cultivated it — across the Atlantic. Brazil, Jamaica, Haiti (then Saint-Domingue), and the Caribbean became major producers on stolen labor. The wealth built on coffee and slavery shaped economies that persist today.

We do not soften this page, because the cup in your hand was carried here by hands that were never thanked. Six Rows Café honors those hands by centering their descendants as the inheritors of this tradition — as farmers, roasters, baristas, and owners, at every seat of the table.

“The wealth built on coffee and slavery shaped economies that persist today. So does the culture that survived it.”

FROM THE SIX ROWS DIASPORA TASTING

01 — THE STORY

Today — Specialty & Sovereignty



THE DRYING BEDS — WHERE PATIENCE BECOMES FLAVOR

Modern specialty coffee traces direct trade routes back to origin, paying premiums to Black and Indigenous farmers in Ethiopia, Kenya, Colombia, and beyond. The Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) cupping protocol scores beans on a 100-point scale; scores above 80 are specialty grade, and every point above that is a farmer's craft made visible.

The movement now is sovereignty: producers owning their export licenses, their roasteries, their brands — the value of the bean staying closer to the hands that grew it. When you buy traceable coffee and taste it with attention, you are part of that correction.

At Six Rows Café, every cup is a deliberate act of cultural reclamation and celebration. This journal is your instrument: the story first, then the skill, then twelve cups of your own.

02 — THE MAP

World Origins & Flavor Profiles



HIGH COUNTRY — ALTITUDE SLOWS RIPENING AND BUILDS SWEETNESS

East Africa

ETHIOPIA · KENYA · RWANDA · BURUNDI · TANZANIA — ALT 1,500–2,200M · WASHED & NATURAL

Blueberry, jasmine, bergamot, bright citric acidity, winey, floral complexity.

West & Central Africa

UGANDA · CAMEROON · DRC · IVORY COAST — ALT 1,000–1,800M · NATURAL & HONEY

Earthy, dark chocolate, tobacco, mild acidity, heavy body, bold character.

Latin America

COLOMBIA · BRAZIL · GUATEMALA · HONDURAS · PERU — ALT 800–2,000M · WASHED & PULPED NATURAL

Caramel, milk chocolate, walnut, stone fruit — balanced, approachable sweetness.

02 — THE MAP

Origins, Continued

The Caribbean

JAMAICA · HAITI · CUBA · DOMINICAN REPUBLIC — ALT 500–1,500M · WASHED

Mild, smooth, subtle nuttiness, mild acidity, sweet finish, low bitterness.

Indonesia & Asia-Pacific

SUMATRA · JAVA · PAPUA NEW GUINEA · SULAWESI — ALT 700–1,700M · WET-HULLED (GILING BASAH)

Earthy, cedar, dark fruit, low acidity, syrupy body, smoky, herbal depth.

Arabia & the Middle East

YEMEN · INDIA (MALABAR) · EAST TIMOR — ALT 1,000–2,000M · NATURAL & DRY

Dried fruit, leather, wine, spice, incense — the original cup of civilization.

READING AN ORIGIN

Altitude is ripening time: the higher the farm, the slower the cherry matures, and the denser and sweeter the bean. Process is authorship: washed coffees speak of place, naturals of fruit, honeys of both. When a bag names its region, altitude, and process, it hands you the first three clues before you ever grind.



THE HARVEST — EVERY CHERRY PICKED BY HAND, AT RIPENESS

03 — THE CRAFT

How to Taste



THE POUR — WATER AT 93°C, PATIENCE AT FULL STRENGTH

The SCA cupping protocol is the global benchmark for specialty coffee evaluation — the same ten movements, performed the same way, from Addis Ababa to Houston. Learn them once and every coffee you ever taste has a language.

01 **FRAGRANCE**

Evaluate the dry grounds' aroma immediately after grinding. Note intensity and character.

02 **AROMA**

Add 93°C water. Smell the crust before breaking, and record the wet aroma descriptors.

03 **BREAK**

After four minutes, break the crust with a spoon. Inhale the released gases; score the aroma.

04 **SLURP**

At 70°C, aspirate loudly to aerosolize the coffee across the palate. Identify the flavors.

05 **ACIDITY**

Note the brightness and quality of the acidity. Is it pleasant — citric, malic — or harsh?

03 — THE CRAFT

The Ten Movements, Completed

06

BODY

Assess mouthfeel and weight — from thin and light to full, heavy, syrupy.

07

BALANCE

Do all the attributes complement one another? Note anything dominating or missing.

08

SWEETNESS

Evaluate the overall sweetness impression — present, clean, complex.

09

AFTERTASTE

How long does the finish last? Is it clean, lingering, pleasant — or off?

10

OVERALL

The holistic score: your personal preference and the cup's total experience.

THE 100-POINT SCALE

Ten attributes, ten points each. The scale is not a verdict on your taste — it is a shared ruler, so that a score spoken in Houston means the same thing in Huila.

90–100

OUTSTANDING

85–89.99

EXCELLENT

80–84.99

SPECIALTY

< 80

NOT SPECIALTY

“Slurp loudly. It is not rude — it is the instrument working.”

CUPPER'S RULE N° 1

The Flavor Wheel

Redrawn for this edition after the SCA / World Coffee Research taster's wheel: nine families, read from the center outward — name the family first, then narrow to the word. The reference on the next page gives you the vocabulary to do it.



FLORAL

Jasmine · Rose · Lavender

FRUITY

Berry · Citrus · Stone Fruit

SOUR / FERMENTED

Winey · Tart · Fermented

SWEET

Caramel · Honey · Vanilla

NUTTY / COCOA

Hazelnut · Almond · Cocoa

ROASTED

Tobacco · Cedar · Smoky

SPICES

Clove · Cinnamon · Pepper

EARTHY / OTHER

Mushroom · Woody ·
Leather

GREEN / VEGETATIVE

Hay · Leafy · Herbal

05 — THE LANGUAGE

Aroma & Taste Reference

FRUITY — Blueberry · Raspberry · Lemon · Orange · Grapefruit · Mango · Cherry

SWEET — Caramel · Toffee · Honey · Maple Syrup · Vanilla · Brown Sugar · Molasses

NUTTY — Hazelnut · Almond · Walnut · Pecan · Macadamia · Peanut Butter

ROASTED — Dark Chocolate · Milk Chocolate · Tobacco · Smoky · Cedar · Burnt Caramel

EARTHY — Mushroom · Woody · Mossy · Herbal · Hay · Leather · Spice

FLORAL — Jasmine · Rose · Lavender · Elderflower · Orange Blossom · Hibiscus

SPICY — Black Pepper · Clove · Cinnamon · Cardamom · Star Anise · Ginger

MOUThFEEL / BODY DESCRIPTORS

THIN / WATERY Under-extracted; skim-milk feel; very light roasts.

MEDIUM Balanced; whole-milk texture; most pour-overs.

FULL / VELVETY Syrupy, coating; espresso, French press, dark roast.

ASTRINGENT Dry, puckering; a sign of over-extraction.

BUTTERY Smooth, rich, coating; an excellent balance indicator.

JUICY Lively, salivating finish; bright East African coffees.

The Brewing Guide

Seven methods, one discipline: weigh the coffee, mind the water, respect the clock. Ratio is coffee to water by weight — 1:16 means 20 g of coffee to 320 g of water.

METHOD	RATIO	TEMP	TIME	GRIND
Pour Over	1:16	93°C	2:30–3:30	Medium-Fine
French Press	1:15	94°C	4:00	Coarse
Espresso	1:2	92°C	25–30 sec	Fine
AeroPress	1:13	80°C	1:30–2:00	Medium
Cold Brew	1:8	Cold	12–24 hrs	Extra Coarse
Moka Pot	1:7	Boil	4–5 min	Fine-Medium
Chemex	1:15	94°C	3:30–4:00	Medium-Coarse

WATER QUALITY

Coffee is 98% water; the water is an ingredient, not a utility. Use filtered water at 75–150 ppm TDS for the best extraction, with a pH in the 6.5–7.5 range. Avoid distilled water (nothing to extract with) and very hard water (it mutes acidity). *Houston tip:* a Brita filter or bottled spring water works well here.



FRESH BEANS, GROUND MOMENTS BEFORE THE WATER — NEVER BEFORE

The Grind Guide

Grind is the dial that decides everything else. Match the particle to the method's contact time: the longer water and coffee spend together, the coarser the grind must be.

EXTRA FINE	Turkish Coffee	●●●●●●●●
FINE	Espresso · Moka Pot	●●●●●●
MEDIUM-FINE	Pour Over · AeroPress	●●●●●
MEDIUM	Drip · AeroPress	●●●●
MEDIUM-COARSE	Chemex · Clever Dripper	●●●
COARSE	French Press · Percolator	●●
EXTRA COARSE	Cold Brew	●

THE EXTRACTION PRINCIPLE

Finer grind = more surface area = faster extraction = a stronger, more bitter cup.

Coarser grind = less surface area = slower extraction = a lighter, sweeter cup.

Taste is the calibration. Sour and thin means under-extracted — grind finer or give it time. Bitter and dry means over-extracted — grind coarser or shorten the brew. Change one variable at a time, and write it in your log: that is what the next twelve pages are for.

Brewer's Rule N° 2 — the grinder is the most important machine in the room.

Black Excellence in Coffee

Six Rows Café celebrates the Black baristas, farmers, and entrepreneurs shaping specialty coffee today. The diaspora story is not history — it has names, and it is still being written.

Dawit Girma

ETHIOPIA / GLOBAL

Third-generation coffee farmer from Yirgacheffe who pioneered direct trade with US roasters, earning three times the market price and funding a school for 200 children in his village.

Phyllis Johnson

CANADA

Co-founder of BD Imports, one of North America's leading green coffee importers, advocating for equity and representation in specialty coffee supply chains for more than 25 years.

Black Excellence, Continued

Andi Trindle Mersch

USA

Author and specialty coffee educator whose work on the SCA curriculum has trained thousands of baristas globally, centering origin knowledge and ethical sourcing.

Rod Harris & the Black Coffee Initiative

USA

Launched in 2020, the Black Coffee Initiative supports Black-owned cafés with grants, mentorship, and wholesale access — a direct response to the systemic barriers in the industry.

Black Excellence, at Home

Jeta Clementi

HOUSTON, TX

Local Houston barista champion and community educator who has run free cupping sessions in Third Ward and Acres Homes, connecting the community to their ancestral beverage.

VK Capital Ventures Inc.

HOUSTON, TX

The hospitality group behind Six Rows Café — committed to creating a boutique Black-owned coffee experience in Houston that centers culture, quality, and community above all.



THE ESTATE — WHERE THE NEXT CHAPTER OF THE STORY IS GROWN

09 — YOUR TURN

The Tasting Logs

Twelve cups, recorded.

One page per coffee — the origin, the brew,
the words the cup gives you, and a score
you can defend. Begin with the best bag
you own. Taste slowly.

“Every cup carries a story — know its roots.”

Tasting Log

N° 01

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 02

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 03

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 04

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 05

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 06

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 07

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 08

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 09

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 10

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 11

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

Tasting Log

N° 12

COFFEE / ORIGIN

REGION

ROASTER

DATE

BREW METHOD

RATIO / DOSE

GRIND

FLAVOR NOTES — CIRCLE THE WHEEL, THEN WRITE THE WORDS

ACIDITY

BODY

SWEETNESS



PROCESS / ALTITUDE (IF KNOWN)

OVERALL

____ / 100

TASTING NOTES

Score it on the SCA scale (p. 9): 90+ Outstanding · 85+ Excellent · 80+ Specialty.

KEEP TASTING

The story continues in your next cup.

Shop small-batch roasts, book a seat at the next Guided
Diaspora Tasting, and taste with us in Houston.



SHOP

sixrowshouston.com

FOLLOW

[@sixrowscoffee](https://www.instagram.com/sixrowscoffee) on Instagram & Threads

COMMUNITY

<https://discord.gg/af49Rmtnr>



THE JEBENA CEREMONY — COFFEE AS RITUAL, POURED AND SHARED

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“Every cup carries a story — know its roots.”