

Odell Calero

Nicaragua

Farm(s): San Francisco, Los Alpes
Region: Matagalpa
Country: Nicaragua
Association: Sajonia Estate
Altitude: 800 – 1200 masl
Varieties: Marsellesa, Catimor, Caturra, Parainema, Lempira
Process: Washed and Natural

One hundred years ago the origins of San Francisco, Los Alpes began with a small plot being bought by Don Odell's grandfather, Moisés Herrera. He passed the small farm onto Don Cesar Calero, the father of Don Odell Calero. Cesar Calero urged his son to buy land around them to grow more coffee, he saw that the future of the farm lay in increasing their production of coffee. For twenty years Don Odell worked the USA remitting money back to his family in Nicaragua that allowed them to buy land and increase their coffee production. In 2012 Don Odell returned to Nicaragua to run the farm.

The coffee is grown sympathetically to the environment with 40% of the crop being under shade, much of this shade is provided by guava and citrus trees that also provide additional incomes. As will many farmers in the area Odell Calero uses around 1/3rd of his land to grow grains and other subsistence crops.

The farm benefits from two thousand millimetres of rainfall every year. The sandy loam soils provide good drainage and in conjunction with average temperatures of 18 degrees Celsius coffee flourishes. The environment attracts a variety of local fauna with Armadillos, Sloths, Deer and Agouti all found on the farm and in the forested mountain springs that surround it.

When the coffee harvest season is at peak activity daily transportation is provided to bring in workers to the farm. The pickers are the life force of the farm and the Calero family reward their efforts by slaughtering two cattle before Christmas and issuing 2 pounds of beef to each registered worker. The lead foreman is given an incentive for work carried out in each harvest, with an "end of harvest" party. San Francisco employs a permanent staff of 28 members who can access annual loans, medical care and even vegetable allotments, from the Calero family.

Upon his return in 2012 Don Odell saw that it was important to differentiate his coffee. He now processes using both Natural and Fully Washed methods. He sends his wet cherry and wet parchment to Sajonia where that coffee is dried in green houses and on patios in a controlled and uniform manner. The cupping results have been consistently spectacular, and Don Odell is building an international following for the coffee that he produces.

Don Odell's quest for high quality and product differentiation was in reaction to the threat of low prices that stalks Nicaraguan coffee producers. By focusing on "micro lot quality" he believes that he can contribute to the reputation of Nicaraguan coffee. As the knowledge of Nicaragua's coffee become widespread he believes that demand for Nicaragua's standard coffee's will also increase, thereby improving livelihoods for all coffee farmers in Nicaragua.

