

María Felicitas Mairena Pérez

Nicaragua

Farm(s): Finca la Verona
Region: El Arenal, Nebliselva, Matagalpa
Country: Nicaragua
Association: Sajonia Estate
Altitude: 1,200 masl
Varieties: Caturra, Catuaí rojo, Castilla, Colombia, Marsellesa, Obata, Parainema and Sarchimor
Process: Washed, Anaerobic, Honey and Natural

The Verona farm received its name from a trade route. It was one of the first farms in Nicaragua that exported its coffee under the concept of Estate Coffee. During the 50's and 60's the farm was exporting its produce to the city of Verona in Italy. At that point it belonged to the Caley Dagnall coffee exporting company.

Prior to that La Verona farm belonged to the Mairena family since the 1920s. After the thirty-year period of being run by the Italian export company it was again acquired by the Mairena family in 1973. In 1984 the farm was confiscated by the Sandinista Regime and in 1996 La Verona was returned, by President Violeta Barrios, to the Mairena family. In 1997 the Günkel Mairena family acquired part of the Verona and in 2015 the Günkel Mairena family bought the rest of the area of the estate from the Mairena sisters. It has been a rollercoaster of a journey.

The 100 year old farm is located in the El Arenal Natural Reserve. Its coffee is produced under agroforestry systems and with the standards of the C.A.F.E. Practices. Half of the of the farm is in the Nebliselva mountain area, where a large amount of water results in an abundance of flora and fauna.

Amongst the 123 acres of shaded grown coffee Maria does grow some basic grains such as maize and beans however in general the farm is very much focused on coffee. Shade is provided by indigenous trees. This "low intensity" farming allows the loamy soil to retain both nutrients and much of the 2500mm annual rainfall. The abundant rainfall is partly due to the cloud forest (nebliselva) that covers roughly half the farm. This, along with the multitude of shade trees helps keep the farm is cool with temperature on La Verona ranging between just 19°C and 30°C.

La Verona employs around 20 permanent staff. The numbers swell during peak harvest with an additional 100 labourers employed to pick and process. These workers live nearby and are provided with free transport to and from the farm, alongside 3 meals each day during their working week, there is also day care provided for those that have small children.

On the farm is between 2500 to 3000 trees per hectare. The farm is made up of Caturra, Catuaí rojo, Castilla, Colombia, Marsellesa, Obata, Parainema and Sarchimor producing a highly diverse output that is optimised by maintaining separation during post-harvest processing. The farm produces around 1,200 quintales of coffee on average each harvest, which equates to around 55,200kg. During harvest coffee is handpicked, with cherries being selected for colour and maturation, and processed using Washed, Anaerobic, Honey and Natural processes. Again, separation is crucial as the wet parchment is transported to Sajonia to be dried at the factory's patios. At the dry mill coffee is quality checked, cupped, scored and assigned to be either a regional coffee or a microlot coffee. Recently Sajonia developed an open-source mobile software traceability system for producers in which coffee results are inputted and published in real-time, creating immediate feedback for producers and agronomists during harvest for quality and consistency.

