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## The Truth about Alamid coffee

If you are a coffee enthusiast, you have probably heard about Alamid coffee, known also as "Kopi Luwak" or "Civet Cat coffee". Purported to be one of the best tasting coffees there is, it is also legendary for being one of the most expensive coffee beans in the world, selling at \$100 per pound, or more.

The costly price is explained by the product's rarity. Alamid coffee beans come from the ripest of coffee cherries that have passed through a civet cat's digestive system and are expelled with their droppings. These droppings are then gathered from the forests of Southeast Asia – in Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines. Since the beans are not regularly and consistently produced, they carry a higher value.



Why then are varieties of Alamid coffee or "Kopi Luwak" widely available, particularly in the export market? A closer investigation of the production of the coffee reveals that greedy coffee producers, in an effort to take advantage of the civet cat coffee craze and the beans' higher per kilo rate in the overseas market, have resorted to keeping civet cats in captivity, force feeding them with raw coffee beans. The result is a more steady supply of coffee beans, albeit inferior in quality.

The civet cat, known as "Musang" in the Philippines, is a nocturnal omnivore that roams the forests at night to search for food. They are known to be solitary hunters and their diet includes small animals, like small mammals, birds, snakes, frogs, fishes and insects. They also eat eggs, fruit, and some roots as well as unclassified coffee cherries, believed to be mostly unripe robusta and barako. It is said that their droppings produce a coffee bean with unique flavours because they are able to sniff out the ripest and tastiest of the coffee cherries from the plant. In contrast, the caged civet cat is fed only raw coffee beans to produce as much of the prized coffee as possible.



Roberto Francisco, president of BCCPI has seen this abusive treatment of civet cats first hand when he travelled to coffee farms producing Alamid coffee. "I have seen farms domesticating these cats just because the price per kilo is good."

...continued on page 2

## Coffeology™

### Roasting



Roasting is what gives coffee beans its beautiful brown hue and distinct flavor. It is the process that sees coffee from its green bean stage to its brown aromatic state. Beans are subjected to heat and then cooled via one of two methods: air-cooling or water quenching. Moisture reduction, caramelization of the coffee's natural sugar, sucrose pyrolysis, and a series of spontaneous chemical reactions occur during the roasting process. The type of roasting machine used greatly affects the kind of roasts produced.



Different degrees of roasts would produce coffee beans of various shades and flavor. The coffee industry does not have standardized degrees of roasts, however basic roasting guidelines are followed. Three terms most popularly used to categorize the degrees of roasting are light, medium and dark, to describe the intensity of the flavor.

\***Coffeology** is a proprietary course on coffee developed by BCCPI to educate clients on anything and everything about specialty coffee. The course covers each step coffee beans take, from farm to cup.

"But the quality of the coffee is not the real thing even if the coffee is digested. We should not discount that the other items in the digestive track that may have influence in the taste of the coffee as it is excreted from the animal. Other items as fruits, dead animal, or insect and other vegetation may contribute to the taste of the coffee."



Mr. Francisco also notes that by keeping them in cages, the coffee growers are abusing/mistreating the civet cats. "The cats normally sleep in holes and burrow in the ground - caging them where it is subjected to light and noise during the day stresses the cat and is cruel."

He also notes that coffee is a seasonal crop. "What do you feed these caged animals when there is no coffee or when coffee is still so unripe?"



Mr Francisco is adamant that the coffee drinking public become aware of this dishonesty, and that they should stop purchasing the fake Alamid coffee, as it only encourages continued abuse of the Musang (civet cat).

He also hopes that regulating bodies do their part to protect those in the coffee industry who carry out their business fairly.



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