

L to R: Checking the roast. Right: Isabela Pascoal Becker displays the Pentabox.

Brazil's Daterra

With all its attention to regions, territories, aged PentaBoxes and quality scores, one might think Daterra Coffee is actually an upscale winery rather than one of Brazil's most prestigious specialty coffee exporters. (By Larry Luxner)

Daterra, A Unique Concept

More than 20 years ago, Daterra — which is part of a large 57-year-old tire retailing group — decided to invest in agribusiness and specialty coffee. The group, headed by Luiz Norberto Pascoal, bought a large farm in the Cerrado Mineiro area, which was then making a name for itself in specialty coffee. “We spent the first eight years recreating the ecosystem of Mineiro, to attract the flora and fauna. We needed to have good production and good soil to produce specialty coffee with sustainable practices,” Pascoal told *Tea & Coffee Trade Journal* during a recent interview. “In the beginning, there was no certification seal. For best management purposes, we decided to build Daterra the same way one would build a winery. The whole area is divided into mini-farms and territories.”

To be exact, its farm covers 6,800 hectares, of which 2,800 hectares are devoted to coffee; the rest is preserved land. The 2,800 hectares planted with coffee trees are divided into 216 mini-farms demarcated by variety; these in turn are subdivided into blocks called *quadras*.

According to a brochure describing Daterra's operations, “this zooming-in approach allows Daterra to trace its coffee from the planted seeds to the delivered beans, thus certifying its coffee origin. GPS and radio technology make it possible to speedily transfer the harvested cherries to the quality processing unit.”

Isabela Pascoal Becker, marketing manager at Daterra said Daterra — which was featured in a 2003 *The New York Times* article about Brazil's coffee industry — has 220

permanent employees, but that the work force rises to 1,000 during harvest time. The company produces 65,000 to 70,000 60-kg bags per year. “We said we wouldn't export anything until we achieved at least scores similar to Costa Rica or Ethiopia. We would also invite people from the Cerrado area to cup the coffees as well,” she said, explaining how the company evolved.

“Meanwhile, we were investing in improving quality by finding new technology to sort all defects and researching coffee varieties. We wanted to make sure we could make a good espresso with sustainable practices,” she continued. “Little by little, we began partnering with universities in Brazil. Because we don't come from a coffee background, we don't bring any traditional ideas with us. Sometimes, you're in the business for so long, you don't even question things, but because we were not, we questioned every detail.”

Isabela, whose father took over Dpaschoal Group, Daterra's parent company at the age of 23 when his father died, is a third-generation company official. She said that the company, in partnership with the IAC (Agronomic Institute of Campinas) and illycaffé, maintains a top collection of germoplasm to promote an ongoing improvement in coffee quality. Its coffee trees grow at alti-



Opus 1 — An Exotic Arabica

Following 12 and a half years of intense breeding and cultivation, Daterra Coffee of Brazil announces Opus 1 Exotic, the first 100% Arabica coffee grown to be naturally lower in caffeine. With less than 1% caffeine, Daterra Coffee's Opus 1 Exotic is the first naturally grown low-caffeine coffee available to Specialty Coffee Roasters.

Developed through natural breeding methods, Opus 1 Exotic is not genetically modified; rather it has been meticulously bred from ancient Ethiopian varieties of *Coffea Arabica*, the finest coffees in the world. Opus 1 Exotic is not a GMO product and poses no threats that are so often associated with GMO products. All Daterra Coffees, including Opus 1 Exotic are Rainforest Alliance certified, ISO 14001 and Utz Kapeh certified.

Daterra Coffee has successfully cultivated and brought to maturity this extraordinary new coffee. It is ready to ship to roasters worldwide. Opus 1 Exotic has 30% less caffeine than traditional Arabicas making it the perfect coffee and its taste profile is one of a kind.

tudes of between 1,000 and 1,200 meters (3,250 to 3,900 feet) and are subject to a narrow range of temperatures, from 59 - 76° F.

The coffee company was Brazil's first to earn Rainforest Alliance certification; it has also acquired ISO, EurepGAP and Utz Kapeh certifications. "We started exporting 12 years ago," she said, estimating that 99% of Daterra's production ends up overseas. Japan is the company's top client, taking

25% of total exports; followed by Australia, Italy, Canada, Great Britain, Denmark, Belgium and the U.S.

Recently, Daterra and the Rainforest Alliance offered training to small producers in the Cerrado area to upgrade its coffee sustainability and quality, so that they could add value to their product. Some of the farmers asked us to help them to sell their coffee. If we have a demand for their coffee

we will offer to our clients these coffees with 100% transparency of origin and producer.

Daterra develops its own blends, she said, noting that "we have a menu of almost 20 blends, all of them estate coffee of controlled origin, which is very different from other farms." At present, Daterra's coffees score between 74 to 92, and its coffees sell for anywhere from \$150 to \$600 a bag. "Now we sell our coffee under our

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own brands. We also wanted to sell our product internally, because we think Brazilians also deserve to drink quality coffee," said Isabela. "While traveling abroad, we learned about selling coffee online. This allows the roaster to roast coffee just before shipping, so customers get a better product. In the U.S., this is very popular, but in Brazil, it's just beginning. So we became the first company in Brazil to sell coffee online roasted on demand."

To that effect, Daterra launched Atelie do Café in January 2006 as a type of club where people can learn about quality coffee through classes, cupping and onsite visits to Daterra's farms.

"The idea is to improve the people's knowledge about quality coffees in Brazil. That's the whole point," she said, noting that this, indirectly, helps sales.

Isabela said Atelie do Cafe has 250 clients, individuals and about five retail accounts. The company has also borrowed a page from the wine industry and begun using its PentaBox technology for packaging its best "vintage" coffees in cardboard + multilayer bags + inert gas boxes — almost the way wines are aged in special oak barrels.

"We can make very good quality, but when you ship in jute bags the coffee is exposed to light and moisture. Probably a lot of what we've been doing to improve quality is lost, so why ship in jute bags? We thought about putting it in sealed bags and cardboard boxes instead.

"The first idea was to vacuum-pack 25 lbs. of coffee and to put two bags in each cardboard box. After a year and a half, we learned that coffee, depending on the quality, was actually getting better in boxes, just like wine. So we decided to age coffee in Pentaboxes, but only very high-quality coffee and no capital defects at all.

"Now we have clients who buy containers only with boxes. It's been proven already to preserve quality for three years. If you're looking for coffee to make an espresso base, the Pentabox can be the best option, because it's been aged."

Becker proudly said her company has patented boxed coffee both in Brazil and internationally. She said Daterra's patented PentaBox assures three years of total freshness. In addition, Daterra has managed to

win some prizes along the way.

"One of the reasons we decided to launch Atelie in Brazil is because we received some prizes for sustainability. In 2005, the Rainforest Alliance conducted a cupping among all samples, and we placed third or fourth after Central American coffee," she said. "That same year, we were named as a 'standard-setter' by the Rainforest Alliance. In May 2004, Troels Poulsen (from Denmark) won the

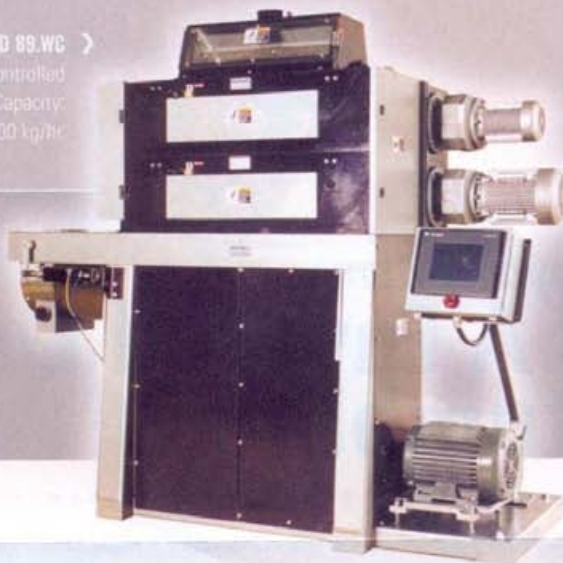
World Barista Championships using 100% Daterra roasted by George Howell of Terroir in Massachusetts.

In 2006, she said, another Dane, Klaus Thomsen, won the championship using Daterra Sweet Collection blended with La Minita from Costa Rica. "One of our passions is not only making great coffee but also improving our espresso collection," she said. "You can fake a filtered coffee, but you can't do this with espresso." ☕

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