



## **FINCA LA MULA - PANAMA**

Origin: Panama

Region: Chiriqui, Portrerillas Arriba

Location: Southern slopes of the Baru volcano

Varietals: Green and Bronze tip Geisha, Dwarf Geisha

Atitude: 5,575 to 5,906 feet (1700 to 1800 meter)

Harvest: January - May and more pickings throughout the year

Processing: Sundried Natural

### **History of the farm**

In 2004 I tasted Geisha coffee when the variety was first presented at a coffee tasting event in Panama. Shortly after my personal discovery of Geisha, I was approached by a fellow Panamanian coffee farmer - Graciano Cruz - who told me about a unique piece of land on the slopes of the dormant Baru Volcano. The fantastic elevation of 1700 meters and the beautiful view of the valley south of Boquete gave me enough reasons to turn a dream into reality. The land was renamed 'Finca La Mula' and eventually we planted more than 6,000 coffee trees on the steep, wooded slopes of this new Geisha coffee farm. The planting of the Geisha babies was a true challenge for the team of fifteen Ngöbe-Buglé workers. Since the beginning of the 19th century, the Indian population has been indispensable for the existence of the Panamanian coffee culture. They perform all the essential farming tasks: from weed management to pruning and fertilizing the coffee trees, to picking the ripe coffee berries. The hardest work, planting, requires the most physical effort. In particular at La Mula. In the absence of a regular road, all coffee seedlings had to be hand carried and transported on foot through the trails winding through the forest.

### **Farm Description**

Finca La Mula is a small, quality-focused micro-farm owned by Willem Boot and managed by Kelly Hartmann of the multi-generational Hartmann coffee farming family. It was planted in 2007 by a group of 15 indigenous Ngöbe-Buglé coffee farm workers, who were students of the Escuela de Café. This school was founded by Panamanian coffee farmer Graciano Cruz, and he organized courses in coffee cultivation, harvesting, processing and cupping. The planting of Finca

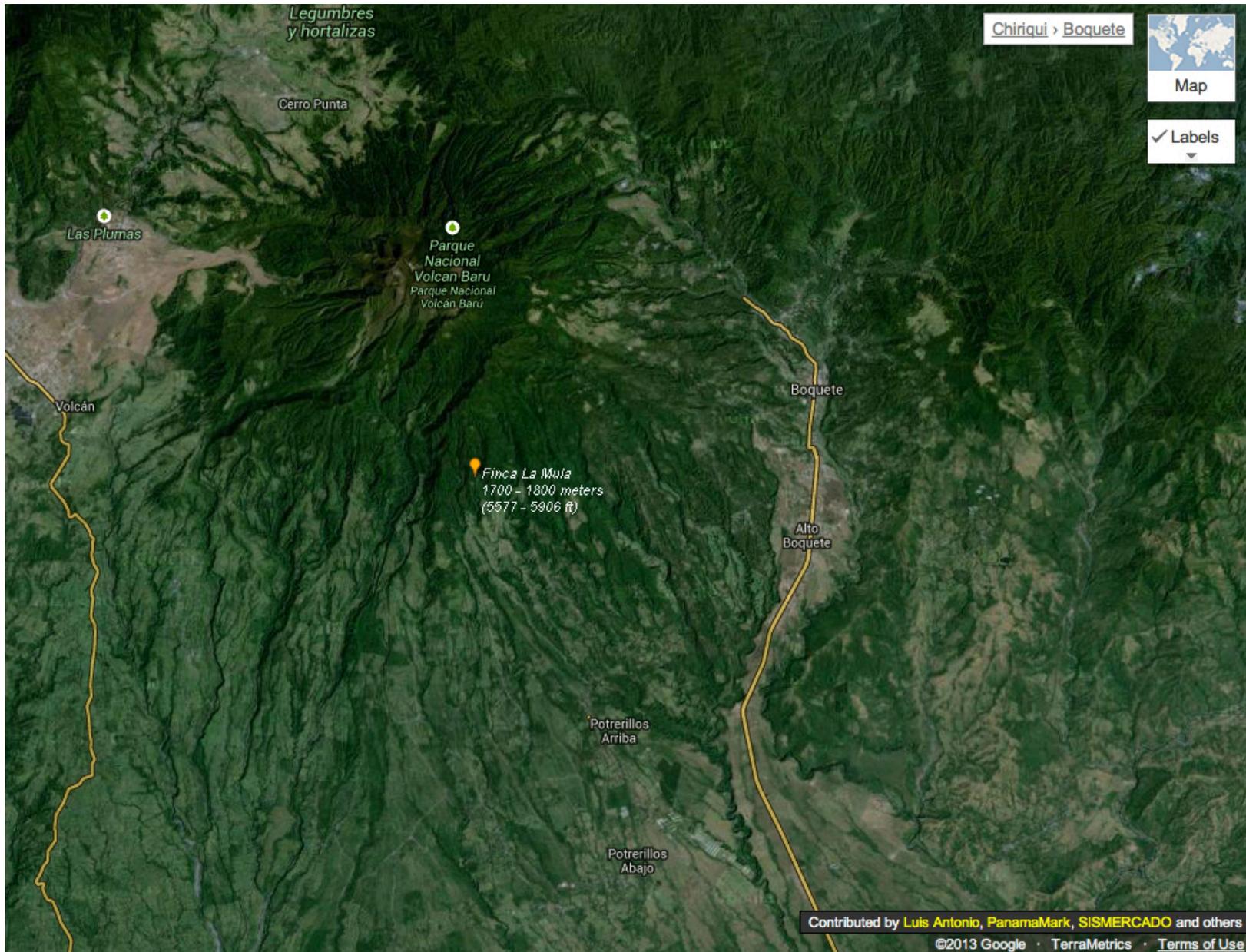
La Mula was part of the curriculum of this school, and training focused on learning coffee farming techniques that would produce high- end coffee in a sustainable environment.

Finca La Mula is located on the southern slopes of the Baru volcano in the Chiriqui province of Panama, at an elevation of 5,575 to 5,906 feet. The farm consists of 5 hectares of land, four of them planted with roughly 6,000 Geisha varietal coffee trees. Within the Geisha varietal grown on the farm, three strains have been discovered including the Green and Bronze tip, as well as a spontaneous hybrid dwarf varietal. Two full-time employees live on the farm in environmentally friendly housing built by farm owner Boot. The housing materials offer a high level of comfort to the employees and protect against cold and moisture. Cooking is accomplished with an environmentally friendly Oneil oven that requires 80% less wood for burning, protects the employees against smoke inhalation and creates a naturally warm environment. A fifth of an acre of the farm is dedicated to growing beans and vegetables for the father and son living on the land.

### **Sustainable Practices**

Finca La Mula is a micro- farm which employs sustainable farm practices that focus on using inputs at an absolute minimum. The environmental policies of the farm have banned the use of herbicides or insecticides. Fungicides are rarely used, and only when the farm has experienced an aggressive fungus attack. Fertilizers are applied strategically in order to maintain necessary plant nutrition in soil. The natural habitat of Finca La Mula is a unique high mountain, tropical forest environment. The owner of Finca La Mula has elected to develop the farm in full harmony with the natural environment. The farm is densely packed with primary and secondary old growth trees, a large population of mammals (including the occasional sighting of a jaguar) and a rich and varied insect life. Cloud forests attract at least two hundred species of migratory birds and provide natural shade throughout the year. This shade keeps the soil moist, reduces the average temperatures which leads to longer maturation for coffee cherries, and negates the need for irrigation. The soil is very high in organic matter and the farm is surrounded by untouched forest land. Finca La Mula has a conservation program regarding water that involves drawing it for local consumption from a nearby stream, and taking coffee to be processed at the nearby Finca Hartmann farm. Plastic and compostable waste are centrally collected on the farm, and taken to be recycled and disposed offsite. Trails are built throughout the farm, with the native, deep rooting 'mirto' tree to avoid soil erosion. Finca La Mula pays workers well above the Panamanian minimum wage and includes added premiums for health care and other social benefits. The two workers employed on the farm live year round on the property and are given food packages during the year for added health benefit. Health care is provided as needed.

This farm exemplifies the non-traditional philosophy of new generation coffee entrepreneurs to go vertical all the way down to the farm level in order to produce unparalleled coffee qualities. In the case of Finca La Mula, the owner offers his employees substantial more economic and personal benefits than in a traditional worker-farmer relationship.



## **Soil**

Volcanic, very high in potassium and phosphorus. Extremely high in organic matter.

## **Processing style**

The sundried natural processing style brings out an array of fruit notes and floral tones. The natural environment of La Mula combined with the unique location justifies the natural sundried processing style. After harvesting, the cherries are dried up to 14 days.

## **Where does the name Mula come from?**

I originally first visited the farm on a mule!

## **Tasting notes**

Aroma of black currants, passion fruit, cacao and jasmin. Multi layered, lingering flavors of dried papaya, tea rose and jasmin infused caramel.

## **Roasting Notes**

Geisha coffee beans have a somewhat unusual morphology. The beans are much more elongated than most other varieties. If you observe Geisha coffee from the side, you might notice the slightly curved shape of the beans; resembling the contours of a canoe. Another unusual feature is the slightly opened center cut of the Geisha beans, which allows heat to penetrate easier into the bean during the roasting process. The relatively high altitude of La Mula coffee (1700 to 1800 meters) creates a higher density compared to most other Geisha beans. A recent measurement of La Mula showed a density of up to 84 kgs per hectoliter, which was more than 5% higher than a comparable Geisha grown at 1550 meters. The high elevation compensates for the opened structure of the beans, which makes the roasting extra complicated. The key challenge is to develop the floral notes of La Mula. I have experienced that an excess amount of airflow during roasting is not conducive for the floral notes. It appears that the more airflow is applied in the drum, the more days it will take for the coffee to develop these floral notes.

If your roasting machine applies high airflow (e.g. Probat, Giesen, Loring) and you cannot reduce this airflow, then I recommend to hold the coffee for at least 72 hours in a closed container or sealed bag before serving.

Machines that have less airflow or machines that allow you to control or reduce the airflow, will be able to develop a floral flavor profile that can be tasted within 24 hours after roasting. The next page contains roasting data we were able to record using our San Franciscan. While writing this document, I am still enjoying the aftertaste of this La Mula with an abundance of floral and fruit notes. The coffee beans were charged at a lower temperature than most other beans. The initial gas setting “gas 5” reflected 70% of the heat capacity of this roaster, using a charge volume of 70% of the machine. If you are roasting a reduced load, then reduce the initial gas setting. Notice the Roast Development Time (RD) of 2 minutes and 36 seconds. This is the maximum RD I recommend to use! Make sure to read the remarks on the next page! Keep in mind that this coffee is always roasted to a light degree which allows the surface of the coffee to be slightly corrugated. If you eat the roasted beans, then the coffee should still feel relatively hard to crack.

The last pages of this document show some close ups of the same roasted Geisha coffee beans.

Final tips, also for the brewing of this coffee:

- I prefer to prepare La Mula by Hario pour over or with a Chemex.
- Brew ratio: 13 grams of water for each gram of coffee
- Grind profile: coarse, almost as coarse as as you would do for French Press.

Good luck and enjoy your La Mula coffee!! Regards, Willem

<b>Key Roasting Events</b>	<b>Important Remark:</b> The 1st crack actually starts just before it pops when you smell some coffee specific (floral) aroma (this is the A-point). La Mula basically starts the first crack very quietly. The graph shows the <u>darkest</u> roasting profile you should develop for La Mula Geisha. Try also roasting the coffee <u>lighter</u> , with a RD of 2 minutes and also with a RD of 1 min. 45 seconds. I have found that machines with more airflow tend to roast the beans more inside out, which can easier develop roasty flavor notes. So, on high airflow machines you should aim for shorter RD times.
1st Crack: 10:34 @ 365F (or sooner)	
Maximum End Time: 13:10 @ 385F	
Maximum Roast Development Time (RD): 2:36	









Roast Profile on a 1 lb SF sample roaster

In my opinion, this is the darkest profile you should develop for La Mula. Ideally, roast it a bit lighter.

