

Philippines Coffee Farmers Earn More From Collecting Civet Coffee Dung

[Batangas](#) : [Philippines](#) | Oct 30, 2011 at 5:43 PM PDT

By [dunite](#)



Civet, a small nocturnal mammal native to tropical Asia, was used to be hunted down and killed for their meat, but after Philippines' farmers discovered their droppings from eating coffee beans were being bought triple the price of regular coffee beans, they were now being sought to thrive in Philippines coffee farms or farmers feed them coffee beans in their cages because their dung help bring farmers a small fortune for their coffee produce, abs-cbn news said.

Civet eats the outer layers of the coffee fruit but the bean inside passes through its stomach where enzymes and acids work to remove the bitter after taste and give it 'a distinctive fruity aroma,' that coffee fans in Manila pay \$7 a cup, but three times that price at \$49 for two cups were being paid by customers in a Heirloom Coffee shop in Massachusetts.

A local coffee farmer, Rustico Montenegro, said he and his wife could collect up to eight kilograms of civet coffee dung in their farm during peak season in the months between March and May. After washing them in a nearby natural spring it could fetch a price as high as \$230 a day, a fortune in a country where a quarter of a million live in one dollar a day.

Montenegro said he sells his coffee to Vie and Basil Reyes, who stumbled on the exotic coffee dung brew while working on a project to save the 'sugar palm tree' and now has become the Philippines largest exporter of the product.

Their company called Bote Central exports three tons of civet coffee product annually to its buyers across Asia and the United States, including South Korea and Taiwan.

PH farmers cash in on civet coffee dung

by Cecil Morella, Agence France Presse

Posted at 10/30/2011 12:25 PM | Updated as of 10/31/2011 6:42 AM

LIPA, Batangas - Philippine farmers used to hunt and kill the civets that ate their coffee beans -- until they realized the animals' droppings were worth a small fortune.

Now the ravenous nocturnal raider with the pungent feces has a status akin to the fabled goose that lays the golden eggs among farmers like Rustico Montenegro, who cleans up after the weasel-like mammals.

"Never in our dreams did we suspect that we could make money out of them," said Montenegro, 44, who switched a few years ago from picking ripe cherries on coffee trees to gathering the undigested seeds excreted on the forest floor.

The small, tree-dwelling palm civet eats the outer fruit of the coffee bean but passes the rest through its stomach.

It is there that the enzymes and acids in the civet's hyper-active digestive system remove the normally bitter aftertaste of the coffee bean and give it a distinctive fruity aroma.

"It has no acidity whatsoever, very full-bodied and the taste is very complex... there's a little bit of spice, a little bit of fruitiness," said chef Jude Mancuya, a civet coffee fan, as he sipped on a cup at a Manila cafe.

Mancuya paid 295 pesos (about \$7) for his cup, which is about double the price of a regular brew in Manila but extremely cheap compared with prices people are paying for civet coffee in the West as its popularity booms.

In the United States, Heirloom Coffee in Massachusetts advertises on its website a brewing and tasting deal at \$49 for two cups, with a choice of civet beans from the Philippines, Indonesia or Vietnam.

In New York, one coffee shop sells the exotic beans at a staggering \$340 a pound (\$748 a kilogram).

For Montenegro and other farmers in Lipa, the capital of the Philippines' coffee industry a couple of hours' drive out of Manila, the civet coffee craze has changed their lives.

Montenegro said he and his wife collected up to eight kilograms (17.6 pounds) a day of beans in the peak season between March and May, washing them in natural springs.

At 1,200 pesos a kilogram, five times the price for ordinary beans, the couple easily clear 9,600 pesos (\$230) a day in the peak season, a fortune in a country where a quarter of the population live on a dollar a day.

The palm civets switch to eating wild fruits as well as cultivated papayas and bananas when coffee trees are not fruiting, however.

Then the Montenegros' income plunges to roughly 500 pesos a week, when they just sell vegetables and whatever fruits the wild animals have not filched.

Montenegro sells his beans to Vie and Basil Reyes, traders who became interested in civet coffee in 2004 and are now the Philippines' largest exporters of the product.

Vie Reyes said she stumbled on the exotic brew while working on a project to save the sugar palm tree, the favourite abode of the civet that also drinks the sugary sap from its flower stems.

Her company, Bote Central, processes the sap into boutique vinegar and exports it to Belgium, but the coffee is now her most important product.

Bote Central has grown to have an annual civet coffee output of about three tonnes, which it exports across Asia and to the United States. South Korea and Taiwan are among the company's largest foreign markets.

Montenegro and Reyes belong to a cooperative that aims to protect the civets, amid a growing trend among farmers and producers to place the animals in cages in a bid to increase harvests.

"I feel bad about it because we sort of opened a Pandora's box wherein people think it's all about money," Reyes said.

She estimated that 80 percent of civet coffee in the Philippines was now produced using caged animals, and said there were similar problems in Indonesia

<http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/-depth/10/30/11/ph-farmers-cash-civet-coffee-dung>

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