

SINGLE ORIGIN ROASTERS: THE CREMA OF THE CROP

Sydney is jam-packed with bean-pushers soliciting your coffee coins. You can find everything from filtered battery acid to exotic microlots for your daily dose of caffeine. Getting the jump on the latest is a full time job – just ask industry mavericks, Single Origin Roasters.

Established in 2003, Single O, as it's known for short, trades at the latter end of the spectrum, providing premium quality coffee minus the pretension. These folks have an insatiable appetite for innovation. From their revolutionary milk-on-tap system to the pure earthy, chocolate and floral tones of their roasts, they challenge the status quo, sourcing, sample roasting, cupping and blending in an attempt to tease the story from the bean.

The term single origin refers to pure unblended coffee from a single growing region. This emphasis on sustainably grown coffee sees Single O circumnavigating both the palate and the globe. From El Salvador to Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Oaxaca and Kenya, they single-handedly source over fifty singles a year, with four different origins available every month, wholesale and retail.



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Since rolling back the doors on Reservoir Street almost a decade ago, Single O has developed from a small café in an undeveloped pocket of Surry Hills to a dynamic business enterprise. In 2011 they added Sideshow to their hand, a brew bar with burnt orange and brass interiors, reflecting the original café's industrial-chic.

Serving takeaway coffees direct to the sidewalk, Sideshow looks like an apothecary's dispensary with its series of glass syphons, pour-over and cold-drip extraction methods. It's dedicated to speciality coffees and alternative brewing techniques, in addition to finely crafted espresso courtesy of their handsome Kees Van Der Westen Spirit and hipster baristas.

From Monday to Friday these bearded alchemists serve up bean-juice elixirs to the breakfast and lunchtime crowds. Whether you prefer washed or honey-processed, bourbon or geisha varieties, there is something to pique your palate.



UNDOUBTEDLY SINGLE O HAS EXPERIENCED SUBSTANTIAL GROWTH. THE EXTENT OF THEIR SUCCESS IS PERHAPS BEST ILLUSTRATED IN THE PROGRESSION FROM BIG BORIS, THEIR FIRST ROASTER, WEIGHING IN AT A MODEST 15 KILOGRAMS, TO TODAY'S BIG, BIG BORIS, WHO STANDS AT A WHOPPING 120 KILOGRAMS.

And if high octane is not your thing, Single O offers a signature chai, roasted from hand-ground spices, as well as a selection of sustainably grown hot chocolates, teas and tisanes.

According to Dion Cohen, owner of Single O, the secret lies in the ability to evolve. Leaving his career in building construction management, Cohen favoured a three-year over a longer plan. In the early days, he personally delivered their first single origins and blends to wholesale clients in his Volvo. Sometimes he made as many as twenty trips a day.

'It was forty-degree heat and there was no air-con,' he says. 'It was my wife's grandma's car. It was a family heirloom.'

Not surprisingly, over the next few years they did the suspension in.

Today their expanding roast works in Botany boasts a cupping laboratory with a training facility. They host barista



workshops and international speakers. May marked the international launch of The Juggler, a hands-free milk-dosing system, designed in collaboration with Six Simple Machines to drastically reduce time and plastic waste. And with the promise of a roast works bar onsite at Botany within the next six months, things don't look like slowing down.

Last year they hired a renowned green bean buyer from the United States. WENDY DE JONG is their woman on the ground, travelling to remote coffee farms to source Single O's rarefied sweetmeats. With over twenty years of coffee expertise and a frequent judge for the Cup of Excellence, Ms de Jong is more than qualified. Like wine, coffee is sculpted by altitude, soil quality and plant variety, resulting in distinctive regional nuances. Highlighting its origin encourages not only an appreciation of this, but also an account of the bean before the barista. Through Wendy, Single O has been able to establish farmer-direct relationships beneficial to both parties. In addition to gaining firsthand knowledge of the crop, they can trouble shoot difficulties in production.

Undoubtedly Single O has experienced substantial growth. The extent of their success is perhaps best illustrated in the progression from Big Boris, their first roaster, weighing in at a modest 15 kilograms, to today's Big, Big Boris, who stands at a whopping 120 kilograms. And yet the driving force behind the brand remains unchanged: the crew is still searching for that sweet spot, the moment when the coffee cherry breaks open to release its magic.

A well-made coffee draws out the journey from bean to cup. In experienced hands, the narrative builds to a satisfying

dénouement. From lingering romance to body-heavy mystique, the possibilities are endless. But one thing's for sure: Nescafé no es café, as the Mexican purists say. (Nescafé is not coffee.) See Single O for your daily medicinal hit.

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Single Origin Roasters
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