



CJ1394 - Decaf Nicaragua San Ramón Mierisch Family Cold Anaerobic Crown Jewel

December 4, 2020 | [See This Coffee Online Here](#)

Intro by Chris Kornman

This is a coffee about connections, in many ways. My connection to the Mierisch family goes back about a decade, when I worked alongside Steve Mierisch, then a sales guy for Intelligentsia, now the owner/operator of Pulley Collective, a cooperative style roasting space that started in New York and has facilities here in Oakland as well as Los Angeles. Jen Apodaca, who now runs the Oakland Pulley facility, introduced me to this coffee first, and reconnected me with Steve.

Steve's family owns and operates a small network of farms in Central America, primarily in Nicaragua. Los Placeres has been in the family since 1922 and is the family's only Rainforest Alliance certified land. 28 of the 270 hectares are dedicated to native forest. The family also ranches cattle on Los Placeres.

According to the Mierischs, "Los Placeres is also ground zero for a new planting technique we are experimenting with. We will plant each tree closer to together, but increasing the distance between each row, in order to increase the amount of plants in a single hectare. We are also aiming for increased airflow and sunlight, which will result in more sugar concentration and more uniformity in the ripening process. We will also be planting [brachiaria](#), a local plant, in order to enhance organic material of the soil. All of this will lead to more efficient and effective harvesting."

This particular coffee is a 4-cultivar blend which was subjected to an especially unique process. After picking the coffee cherries, sorting, rinsing, and floating them, the fruit is added to food-safe barrels. The barrels are sealed off with a PVC pipe and one-way valve for offgassing. The barrels are stored in an air-conditioned room, chilled to 45-50F, and left to ferment for two days. The sealed tank limits the population of microbes available, while the cold storage slows fermentation down.

"After spending 48 hours inside the cold room," said the Mierischs, "the cherries are spread out as a thin layer on our patio under 100% sunlight where they will spend for two days. The cherries are moved three to four times a day, always making sure not to damage the cherries. After spending two days on our patio they were transferred onto African beds inside a greenhouse. The cherries finish drying on the African beds for an additional 26 days." Finally, the coffee was sent to Swiss Water for chemical free decaffeination.



The result is an uncommonly juicy decaf with exceptional sweetness. Cherry cola, melon, pineapple, and a number of other sweet fruit notes pair marvelously with a lush, silky body and graham cracker and vanilla sweetness. We're serving it up as our decaf espresso at the Crown, so look to the Brew Notes for a little insight on how it's pulling as shots, or stop by to taste for yourself.

Grower:	Mierisch Family / Los Placeres	Process:	Cherries rinsed, floated, and then fermented in a sealed tank with clean water in an airconditioned room for 48 hours. Dried for 2 days in the sun followed by 4 weeks on raised beds. Decaffeinated by Swiss Water Process
Region:	Yasica Sur / San Ramón, Matagalpa, Nicaragua	Cultivar(s):	Red Bourbon, Red Catuai, Caturra, Javanica
Altitude:	970 masl	Harvest:	November 2019 - February 2020

Green Analysis by Nate Lumpkin

This decaffeinated coffee from Nicaragua comes to us with well below average density and moisture content. Its water activity is below average as well. Its screen size is on the large side: the great majority is sorted into sized 17 through 20, with most of that falling into sizes 17 and 18. Coffee with density this low may experience scorching by high heat, especially early in the roast, so consider a gentler approach. Additionally, its low water activity should lend itself to maintaining its quality in storage under good conditions. Its relatively tight screen size should help it find consistency in the roast.

The coffees here are four different varieties. Javanica is a variant specific to Mierisch Farms, originally cultivated from the Java variety, which was itself cultivated from Ethiopia landraces. This variety was cultivated according to structural changes in the plant noticed by Erwin Mierisch, and which he states now exhibits longberry characteristics as well as improved cup quality. Red Bourbon is simply a red-fruited variety of the widely cultivated legacy variety Bourbon. Caturra is a single-gene mutation of Bourbon, which has a shorter stature and therefore the potential for higher planting density and yield. Red Catuai is a red-fruited variety of Catuai, which is formed from a cross between Caturra and the Brazilian Mundo Novo.

Screen Size	Percent	Density
>20	11.97%	631 g/mL (free settled)
19	18.83%	641 g/mL (Sinar)
18	29.61%	
17	21.01%	Total Moisture Content
16	9.94%	6.9% (Sinar)



15	4.22%		
14	2.73%		Water Activity
≤13	1.69%		.505 @ 20.45 C (Rotronic)

Ikawa Analysis by Nate Lumpkin

As of September 2020 we are running all Crown Jewel Analysis roasts on an Ikawa Pro V3, using the most recent app and firmware version on “closed loop” setting.

Now here’s an interesting coffee. I actually had the chance to brew Candice’s roasts on pour-over before cupping my Ikawa roasts, so I knew I was in for a unique experience, and I was very curious to see how this coffee performed on the Ikawa V3. Its very low density and moisture content could hypothetically prove a challenge, and at it turns out, not every roast brought out the coffee’s best qualities.

Our standard hot and fast profile had a very late first crack, and spent a mere 22 seconds in post-crack development. On the table, it produced a cup with a distinct chocolate peanut butter aroma, and flavor notes of apple, cranberry, milk chocolate, peanut butter, and white sugar. It had a slight astringency when it was hot, which decreased sharply as it cooled, and it eventually became very sweet, but not in an overpowering way. I liked this cup but found it a little bit simple.

Our second, somewhat longer profile with an elongation of the Maillard phase produced a cup with a nice maple aroma, and notes in the cup of blackberry, plum, persimmon, and almond butter, with a juicy and creamy body. The astringency of the first roast was much lower here, and the maple aroma emerged into a sweet flavor note in the cup as it cooled. These qualities are not unexpected with a roast like this. I imagine the longer time in Maillard, and longer time in post-crack development, really allowed its sugar browning notes to develop. This was my preferred cup: it had this coffee’s lovely juiciness, and that wonderful note of persimmon, which I have been eating many of this fall in California.

Our third low airflow profile had a mild floral aroma, and notes in the cup of jasmine, hibiscus, cherry, and maple. This cup was quite delicate, almost like white tea. I found this roast’s overall flavor profile to be a little lacking. While I liked the florality, and it reminded me of a decaffeinated flower tea, I prefer this coffee when it’s juicier and more robust. But, if you’re looking for a very delicate decaffeinated cup, consider using a roast like this one.

You can download the profile to your Ikawa Pro app here:

Roast 1: [Crown Standard SR 1.0](#)

Roast 2: [Crown Maillard +30 SR 1.0](#)

Roast 3: [Crown 7m SR LowAF 2](#)



Probatino Analysis by Candice Madison

The second of this week's coffees did not play nicely, but we can always blame user error! First, a word about decaf. Everyone makes mistakes, that's what decaf is for. Those times when you go on a café crawl, to just one last shop, or when the urge to cup just one more table takes hold. We've all been there! Like many people, I used to look at decaf coffee as a mistake, a coffee I didn't order or want, something for older people, or those with ailments to imbibe. Not me. Never. And then I became a coffee professional and a well-chosen, high quality lot of coffee, grown with care and harvested at its peak, roasted and brewed to as close to perfection as possible, became the holy grail.

We've had some great decaffeinated coffees here at The Crown, and this coffee from Steve Mierisch and The Mierisch family is no exception. I met Steve when we both lived in New York and Pulley in Oakland was just a twinkle in his eye and have known of the Mierisch family for longer but have never had the opportunity to roast any of their coffees, I was excited to get my hands on this uniquely processed coffee. The fact that it is decaffeinated is a boon – now I can have as much as I want!

This coffee from Los Placeres comes with low density and moisture metrics, so being sensitive to these factors when roasting. I would never advise putting decaf in your machine as the first roast of the day – you want your roaster to be as thermodynamically stable as possible for delicate coffees, and by way of being double processed, decaf coffee counts as delicate. I would also be extremely wary of putting the coffee into very hot roast system and thinking I had done enough to mitigate the any issues, I started my roast. I was wrong, but edifyingly so!

I dropped the coffee into the drum at 360F and with a minimum gas of 2 – so far, so usual, however, I had the gas on half flame, in order to apply heat gently from the start. I wanted to keep to my usual pace of roast, applying heat in a way that made sense to that timing, without sacrificing the gas profile I prefer. To do this, I decided to mimic the way I would roast this coffee if it were of standard moisture readings but keeping the heat at 50% lower than normal. This seemed to work, and I turned the gas up to 3 on the dial after the turning point. For reasons I can't account for looking at the graph (I'm assuming a misread of the rate of change) I decided to turn the dial up to 3.5. Even at half flame, that error of 60 seconds, meant I shave exactly that off of the end of the roast. The result of that brief, but significant, ratio of time spent at the maximum heat, sped my roast up and by the time I was approaching first crack, at breakneck speed, there was no slowing down. I did lower the gas about 30 seconds before first crack but seem to have missed recording it.

Suffice to say, the cupped roast was fast, with less complexity than I would have liked. But what I got I really liked! A super sweet cup of drinking cocoa and muscovado sugar, with pineapple and caramel notes and a juicy clean body. So what was so edifying about this roast? Well, it can be comforting to know your work well enough that your predictions about your mistakes can be so well understood. The me learning to roast is mighty proud of the mistakes I made – they make me a better teacher, as well as better coffee. And this lot? I can imagine this coffee would make a delightful espresso base for my erstwhile afternoon cappuccino at The Crown or a delicious, light brewed coffee with which to while away the winter's waning light.



Quest M3s Analysis by Evan Gilman

Unless otherwise noted, I follow a set standard of operations for all my Quest roasts. Generally, I'll allow the machine to warm up for 15 minutes until my environmental temperature reading is at least 250F, weigh out 150g batch size, and begin roasting when I've reached my desired charge temperature. [Read my initial post here](#) and my [updated post here](#).

Decaf has, in my estimation, been transformed from reviled to regaled. In years past, dark thoughts of decaf inferiority plagued our minds like the dancing of emaciated sugar plum faeries. Perhaps that's grotesque, but remember the 'death before decaf' slogan? There has been a lot of stirring around decaffeinated coffee lately, and after tasting some great options I have to say I'd (still) prefer decaf. And this is a decaf option that ventures far beyond mild preferences to go on living. It brings life to your cup despite its lack of caffeine, stimulating in its flavor alone.

I approached this coffee much in the same way I've approached prior decaffeinated selections: slightly lower charge temperature and lots of airflow. Since decaffeinated coffees generally have slightly lower moisture content and density, I also held back on extreme heat application and took a gentle approach. As you'll see in my specs below, this worked for the beginning of roast, but this coffee behaved a bit more like a regular old caffeinated coffee towards the end of my roast.

Starting with 7.5A heat application and full fan, I allowed this coffee to dip down to a common 219F at its lowest point. At turning point, I ramped up heat to 10A and cut the fan. As for my gentler approach, I reduced heat application back to 7.5A at 3:00 / 280F, and introduced airflow to 3 on the dial. This coffee took its time getting through drying stage and into Maillard, and I reduced heat further at 4:05 / 320F along with adding full airflow. This allowed the coffee to spend 43% of its roast time in Maillard, and cutting heat entirely at first crack allowed me to spend 14.5% of the roast in post-crack development without surpassing 396.5F. This is a fairly low final temperature for the Quest M3s, but as it turned out, this was a great decision.

Crack is faint with this coffee, so keep an ear out for those successive pops. While it wasn't totally silent, you'll definitely need to turn down that new Melvins / Deftones / Napalm Death album to get a good read on the start of first crack. Maximum attention yields maximum results.

The flavor notes I got from this coffee weren't ones that I was prepared for after smelling the aromas of roasting. All I got from the roast was mall pretzels, baking bread, and perhaps a touch of kalamata olive. Not inspiring – or so I thought. Chris' note of pineapple came through very clear in the brewed cup, and while I didn't get the cola note (perhaps due to my lighter roast), I did get abundant brown sugar and caramel sweetness, especially in the finish. Affable, quaffable, coffee.

This coffee is sweet for days and would accompany a meal so nicely. I'm back on the train of drinking coffee with or after dinner, so this coffee really did right by me. So don't knock decaf – especially until you try a coffee like this!



Brew Analysis by Nate Lumpkin

I haven't had the chance to brew up any decaffeinated coffees since March, and this coffee has such an unusual "cold anaerobic" processing style, that I was very curious to see how it brewed on pour-over. I reached for the Fellow Stagg and the Hario v60, two devices we often use here at the Crown. As it turns out, this coffee brewed really nicely, with a delicious tartness and creaminess that I'm very excited to experience on espresso.

The Hario v60 produced a quick brew, with a somewhat low extraction of only about 16%, despite the relatively high dose and fine grind setting. In the cup however, it produced tart notes of pear, granny smith apple, plum, and blackberry, with a dark chocolate and caramel sweetness. Its body was somewhat delicate, which is to be expected from its low extraction. But I found this really delicious, and I recommend it.

The Fellow Stagg brewed only a touch longer and produced a little bit of a higher extraction at 17%, but produced a significantly heavier body. In the cup, we tasted notes of blackberry, blueberry, and green grape, with a turbinado sugar and vanilla sweetness, kind of like a milkshake. To be honest, this didn't taste very different from the v60, though it did have that creamier body and vanilla note, so consider trying to push up this coffee's extraction to experience its full range of body and sweetness.

These were both really excellent brews, and to be honest, not at all what I expected from a decaffeinated coffee. I might say my eyes have been opened a little bit and I can't wait to be pulling shots of this one!

Roast	Method	Grind (EK43)	Dose (g)	H2O (g)	Ratio	Bloom (g)	Bloom (s)	Total Brew Time	TDS	Ext%
Probatino	V60	7	20	300	1:15	45	30	2:27	1.23	15.94
Probatino	Stagg	7	20	300	1:15	45	30	2:29	1.31	16.99