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# Purveyors of the Bean

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF SILVA

**F**or Wayne and Cleo Silva, the humble coffee bean represents an endless source of curiosity. From experimental home roasters to established specialty coffee roasters, exploring their love for the bean has been a ten-year journey that has its roots in a move from the city to Warburton in the Yarra Valley. With a passion for sourcing local and fresh grown food, they set about creating a home-grown lifestyle that was sustainable and reflected their love of real flavour. In the early days of commuting to the city for work, coffee was an essential pantry item, and when they realised there was no local source for fresh roasted beans, a friend introduced them to the idea of home roasting.

Wayne home roasted their first batch of ethically sourced Ethiopian green beans with a heat gun and a bread maker which, on the knead cycle, provided the perfect agitation for an even roast. His electronic technician background, passion for figuring out how things work, and desire to explore all the ways the bean could be transformed started out as a pursuit for a perfect coffee at home, but it soon became obvious that fresh roasted coffee was missing in the community.

"We loved the vibrancy and difference in flavours with a fresh home roast and we enthusiastically shared our obsession with friends. People loved tasting our just-roasted coffee and we were encouraged by their feedback," says Wayne. "We soon found once you've had a great freshly roasted coffee, you can't go back!" says Cleo.

When Cleo, with her extensive background in customer service, came home from a local small business course one night in 2009 and said to Wayne, "Hey I think this could actually be something—we could make a business out of our obsession," an idea was put in motion that today sees them roasting half a tonne of beans a week for their wholesale and retail customers.

On the eve of their ten-year anniversary in business (and twenty years as a couple), they can reflect back on their early morning starts selling beans at farmers' markets (feedback was essential to their steep learning curve and refinement of flavours) to the moment in 2016 when they moved their business from home to a factory site in Wesburn, where people can visit their tasting room for a 'coffee flight' and watch the roasting process first hand. "Wayne," says Cleo, "leads the way in innovation and science," but their joint fascination with flavour and their obvious synergy is part of their success. They named their business Silva Coffee after Wayne's Lithuanian surname. Their first tag line was 'Coffee roasted in the tall forests of Warburton in the beautiful Yarra Valley'. At the time they didn't realise the English translation of silva was 'tall forests.'

What makes a great coffee? Beyond the complexities of growing, roasting and extraction, most people would say taste. For Cleo, it's all about flavour and simple enjoyment.





## *“We want to take people beyond a café latte”*

For Wayne, who has completed the Q Coffee Grading Course (a global certification to evaluate and score coffee), there are more than 800 flavour profiles to appreciate!

Their mission has and will always be to move beyond coffee being a consumable to something truly appreciated. “We want to take people beyond a café latte,” says Cleo.

Wayne and Cleo work with the philosophy that local is best. “It was always evident to us that food was at its best when sourced fresh and seasonally from local producers, and we believe the same goes for coffee. We love that we now offer this to our local community and beyond.”

They recognise their place in the supply chain and work hard to minimise their footprint and be sustainable. Their coffee chaff, with its high nitrogen content, is a welcome addition to the compost heaps of local vegetable growers and their daily ‘grind’ is always mindful of what can be repurposed and recycled – from the reusable tins they deliver wholesale beans in, to the hessian sacks the green beans are delivered in. They have also installed solar power at the factory.

This philosophy extends to respectful relationships with coffee suppliers across the globe. Silva Coffee is an active member of the Rainforest Alliance program and



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works closely with coffee farms and importers. Wayne recently visited the coffee plantation of Carlos, a fourth-generation coffee grower from Colombia, who in return has visited the Silva Coffee roastery in Australia. It's a direct connection that strengthens mutual knowledge and understanding.

Silva Coffee also participated in the GIMA project in Brazil, which is an annual project run by the Bom Jesus farm to raise environmental awareness for children in the area. This project provides children with new bikes and computers improving access to education. They actively work with suppliers where the focus is on economic sustainability for farmers and women, and social improvement. "We tell the story that every coffee you drink has an impact," says Wayne. "It matters. How we conduct our business matters."

For Cleo and Wayne, there is love and fascination in coffee. The nuances of origin, terroir, roast, flavour, mouthfeel, acidity, aroma, body, grind and brewing conditions means there is always a new profile to explore. From the fruity-cherry flavours of an Ethiopian bean, to the honey-hazelnut flavours of the Brazilian, to the thick syrupy body of the Indonesian varieties, there is joy in finding something new, unexpected and delicious.

Their friends and customers aren't the only ones who appreciate the nuances of their roasts. Silva Coffee have won multiple awards at the Golden Bean (the Australian and New Zealand Coffee Roaster Awards)



and the International Coffee Roasting Awards, including silver and bronze medals. Wayne feels it's not about the awards though; "It's great to have industry feedback and to have my flavour profiles recognised. We are a boutique roaster in the Yarra Valley, but our reputation is now of international standard."

"A perfect coffee is one you always remember," says Cleo. "We want to open up a world of coffee flavours for people and share our love and excitement for the never-ending range of coffee that is there to be discovered – from the mountains to the valley!" ■



# Five ways to love coffee differently

1. Pour over coffees are the next big thing in coffee appreciation – highlighting the unique flavour profile of the beans without the addition of milk.
2. Cold brew coffees – either drip style or immersion brew (and the signature ingredient in an Espresso Martini) are capturing the palates of coffee lovers especially during summer as a refreshing drink poured long over ice, mixed with cold milk, or carbonated/mixed with soda water. Look out for a sparkling long black!
3. Brewing coffee at home – different beans and different brewing methods yield a different coffee experience. It's not unusual for people to have a stovetop, AeroPress and espresso machine in their home to choose from.
4. Coffee grinds make excellent body scrubs, are wonderful additions to compost for the veggie patch and will keep garden pests at bay.
5. Cooking with coffee – try adding fresh brewed coffee to a chocolate cake! Coffee is a versatile addition to many sweet and savoury recipes. Wayne recently made a kangaroo jerky marinated in cold brew with a touch of honey and habanero! Delicious.

*For more information visit:*

[www.silvacoffee.com.au](http://www.silvacoffee.com.au)

