2022 Annual Coffee Report

Lex & Bex Tasting Lab

Executive Summary:

Findings from our 2022 coffee ratings.

Context

- Report statistics are based on tastings of 30 distinct coffees from 27 roasters, sampled between March and December 2022.
- Rebecca and Alex independently provided tasting notes and rated each coffee from 1-10. Information about the coffee selections (e.g. origin country, elevation, roast process) were documented when available [see data].

Results

- Average score for the 30 coffees was 6.65
- Favorite Coffees of the Year (Tie):
    - Fankor Natural Process (rating = 9)
    - Cosmic Dust, Natural Carbonic Maceration Process (rating = 9)
- Worst Coffee of the Year:
    - AeroMexico in Flight (rating = 1.5)

Additional Findings

- Price-per-ounce of coffee beans did not have a strong correlation with rating.
- Alternative process & lighter roast coffees were significantly associated with higher ratings.
- Coffee sourced from Oceania had the highest average score; coffee sourced from Africa had the lowest average score.
- Alex's average rating was higher than Rebecca's, but the rating sets were highly correlated (0.87).

Looking Forward

- We hope to expand our sample size and diversify our portfolio; additional coffee from Asia and more low/mid-tier coffee would round out our dataset.
- Outlook is good to drink more great coffee!

Context

Background

In March of 2022, we began to document an activity that we did frequently - tasting coffees, discussing their merits and issues, and rating them on a 1-10 scale. Rebecca realized there was some great data to be harvested and Alex realized there was leverage to buy more fancy coffee. The spreadsheet was born!

Methodology

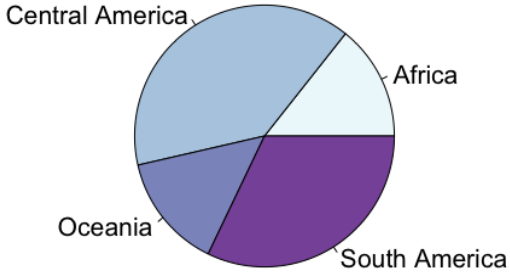
For each coffee tested, Rebecca and Alex simultaneously tasted the coffee for a few minutes to form an opinion. Each person would then share (1) tasting notes (2) an opinion and (3) a rating from 1-10. Information about the coffee and situation were documented (examples: roaster, process, coffee origin country, coffee origin elevation, brewer, drinking location, etc). See data.

Coffees Tested

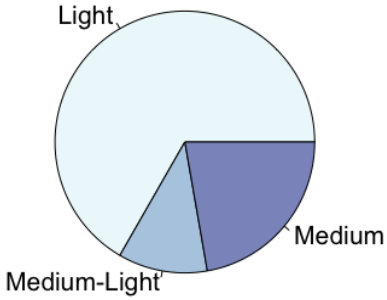
Over the course of 2022, we tested 30 different coffees from 27 distinct roasters and 14 different countries. Key dimensions and tasting notes are as follows:

Process

Macro Region



Roast



Alex's Tasting Notes

Rebecca's Tasting Notes

Results

Favorite Coffees of the Year (Average Score ≥ 8)

					Ratings		
Rank	**Roaster** (Coffee Name)	**Roaster Location**	**Source Country**	**Process**	**Avg**	**R**	**A**
1st, Tie	**Fankor**	Quito, Ecuador	Ecuador	Natural	**9**	9	9
	Cosmic Dust (Quantum)	San Jose, CA	Indonesia	Natural*	**9**	9	9
3rd, Tie	**Fankor**	Quito, Ecuador	Ecuador	Washed	**8.5**	9	8
	Amity	Penn Yan, NY	Costa Rica	Thermal	**8.5**	8	9
	Treeline (Educator)	Bozeman, MT	Nicaragua	Natural	**8.5**	9	8
6th, Tie	**Treeline** (Innovator)	Bozeman, MT	Colombia	Natural	**8**	8	8
	Luna	Langley, BC	Honduras	Honey	**8**	8	8

** This natural process includes a carbonic maceration phase*

Worst Coffees of the Year (Average Score ≤ 4)

					Ratings		
Rank	**Roaster** (Coffee Name)	**Roaster Location**	**Source Country**	**Process**	**Avg**	**R**	**A**
1st	**AeroMexico** (In Flight)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	**1.5**	2	1
2nd	**7-11** (7Reserve)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	**3**	3	3
3rd	**Chromatic** (Masadi*)	San Jose, CA	Ecuador	Dry	**4**	3	5

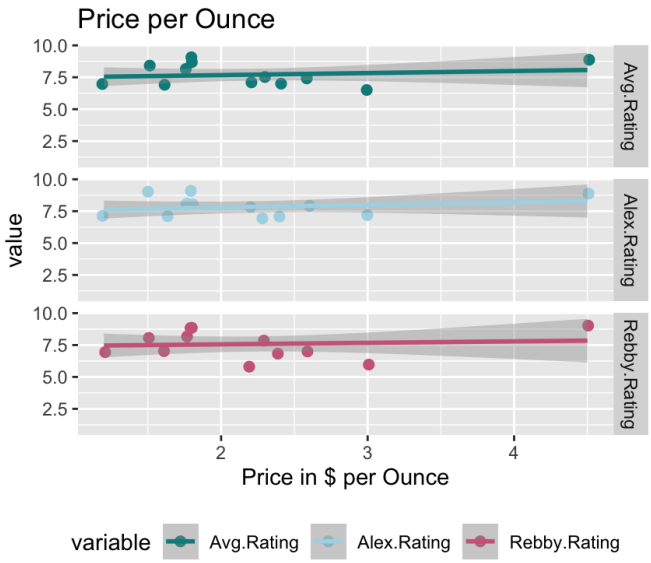
** This is a robusta coffee, a separate species from the typical arabica.*

Additional Findings

Price

We do not observe a strong correlation between ratings and the dollar-per-ounce price of beans. Some hypotheses as to why we do not see the positive correlation one would expect are (1) low sample size and (2) some top-rated coffees were purchased abroad in lower-cost locations (e.g. Ecuador).

It's notable that Cosmic Dust, seen top right, is a top rated coffee and an outlier in terms of price ($4.5/oz). When excluding Cosmic Dust, the correlations between price and rating become negative.

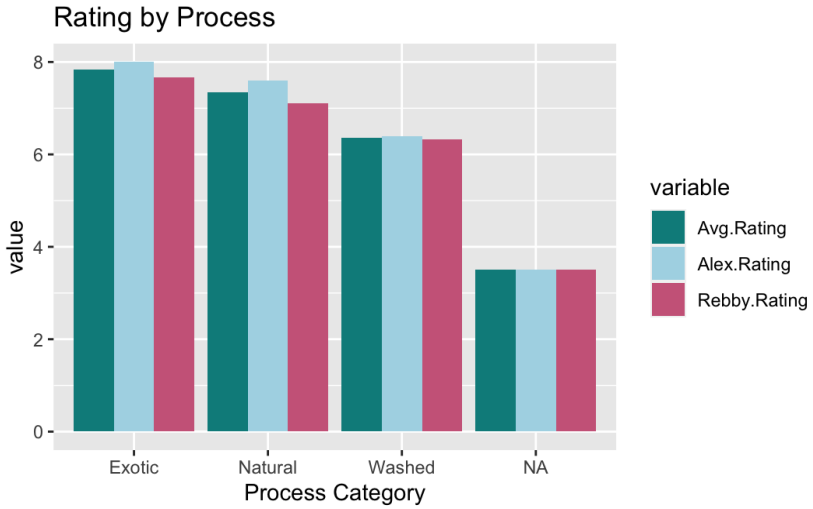


Process

The process of a coffee refers to the method used by the producer to ferment and dry the coffee beans. The majority of coffees are washed, natural process is becoming more popular in high-end coffee, and exotic process (e.g. honey, thermal) are at the forefront of specialty coffee production.

Both Alex and Rebecca tended to give higher ratings to coffee that used alternative processes (natural or exotic) compared to the typical washed. Coffees made using exotic processes, including honey and thermal, were rated the highest on average.

Alex's ratings of alternative process coffees were significantly higher than his ratings of washed process coffees (p = 0.04).

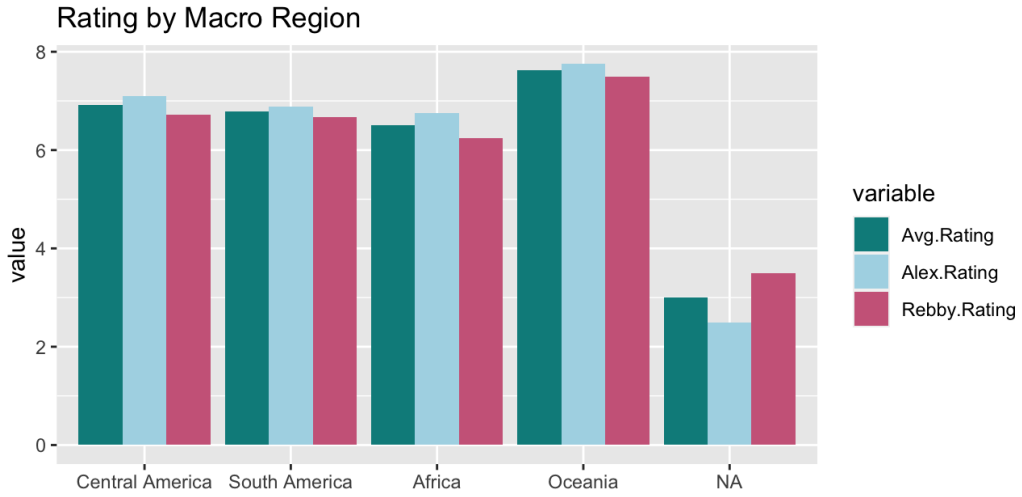


Roast

Unsurprisingly, we tended to prefer lighter roasts. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) reveals that the differences in rating by roast are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

Macro Region

On average, Alex and Rebecca both had the highest average rating for coffees from Oceania (Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Timor Leste). Out of coffees where the origin country was known, coffees from African countries (Kenya, Ethiopia) scored the lowest.

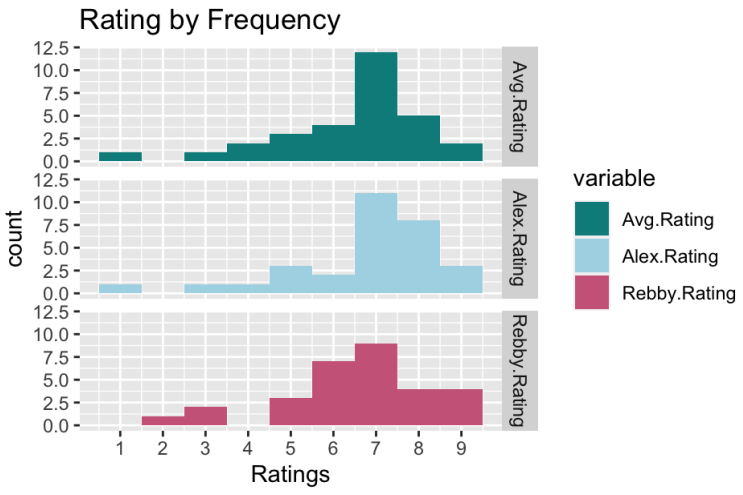


Overall Quality

The average score was 6.65. Alex's average (6.77) was higher than Rebecca's (6.53), but this difference was not statistically significant.

Rebecca and Alex's scores were highly correlated (0.87).

The lowest score granted was a 1 and the highest was a 9.



Looking Forward

Reducing Limitations

- Small sample size and missingness in the data reduced our ability to identify statistically significant relationships between variables and ratings. This indicates an urgent need to sample at a greater frequency.
- While we aim to have a shared understanding of how numeric rating should be assessed, we need to formalize this rating process. At least we should have standard definitions for 1, 5, and 10.

Things To Strive For

- While we tend to try better-than-average coffee and thus expect our average score to be > 5, we'd like to incorporate a wider variety of coffee quality and price points in order to build out a more holistic understanding.
- Next year, we may experiment more with preparation variables such as grind, temperature, and procedure in order to understand their relationship with flavor.
- We'd like to include validation of our testing calibration through the inclusion of third-party sampling. For this we will host an open call for participants in future sampling sessions, hosted locally and on location.
- We encourage the submission of premium quality samples for representation in our 2023 report.