

Long Island

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TASTE People

By LYN DOBRIN

Coffee Worthy of the White House

There's another white house with a red phone but this one is in Long Island City and it's strictly about coffee.

The red phone, located at the coffee importing and roasting company White House Coffee, is a direct line to coffee growers; and when it rings, Sury Kothari, the company's buyer and director of quality control knows he might be hearing from coffee growers in Kenya, Colombia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Jamaica, or a dozen other far flung regions, asking if he wants what they have to offer. "They call me and tell me they have 250 freshly harvested bags of coffee and want to know if I am interested."

Coffee certainly is a life-long interest of his. Kothari was born and raised in East Africa, where his father owned tea and coffee farms in Kenya and Uganda. He worked on the farm and for the Uganda Coffee Marketing Board, and in 1981, he came to White House Coffee, which has been owned and operated by the White family since 1939.

If Kothari's answer to his caller is yes, then samples are sent overnight. He roasts some of the beans in his lab, brewing eight to ten cups.

"I want to see that they are all even; that there are no defects and that all are similar in taste, acidity, aroma and flavor." White House Coffee only accepts European prepared standard beans (for which they pay a significant premium as opposed to ordinary American prepared coffees)—

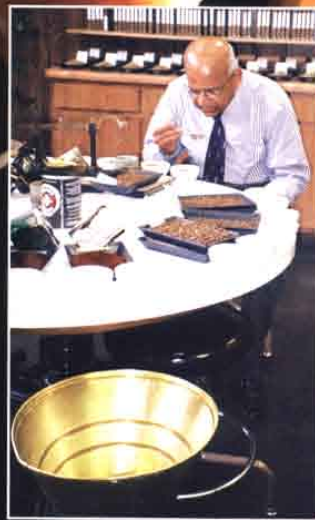
beans that are grown at a high altitude and noted for their exceptional flavor.

If he likes what they've sent, he bids and, if the bid is accepted, the grower ships the coffee. A pre-shipment sample arrives. When that comes, it is roasted as is the first sample to see that they are both the same.

When the full shipment arrives on the dock, samples are taken and brought to Kothari. "So now I am comparing the original, the pre-shipment and the new arrival. If all is kosher, we go ahead and bring the coffee in the house."

And that's not the end of it. When the coffee is being unloaded at the White House Coffee building more samples are drawn, roasted, tested and compared with the original preshipment sample. The fifth, and final, test occurs when the coffee is roasted just before it is shipped to various White House Coffee clients on Long Island that include IHOP, Milleridge Inn and major full line distributors and office coffee services.

Asked for some tips on brewing coffee, Kothari suggested grinding the beans just prior to brewing; use only freshly drawn, clear cold water; make sure your coffee maker is spotlessly clean; make sure the grind is correct for your coffee maker; and use the correct amount of coffee (two rounded tablespoons of ground coffee to each six ounces of cold water).



Sury Kothari tests coffee samples at White House Coffee.