

AN UPDATE ON UNIFICATION

BY FLOY ANDREWS

Photos courtesy of the Specialty Coffee Association

Since the unification of the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) and the Specialty Coffee Association of Europe (SCAE), the two legacy coffee roasters guilds have been devising their own mash-up strategies. Leading that charge is Isa Verschaegen, the unified Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) guilds director. Isa and I, along with Ellie Hudson and Vicente Partida, spoke at length this past autumn. Ellie is the SCA's special projects director, currently working on unification issues; Vicente is the SCA director of communications. Our conversation occurred somewhere in the ether over the mid-Atlantic (via Zoom, a video conferencing platform), with participants calling in from Belgium, London, Michigan and California to discuss the current state of guild unification.

The heritage Roasters Guild (on the U.S. side of the Atlantic) was founded 17 years ago. It offers opportunities to engage with the greater coffee roasting community and enhance roasting skills through education and competition, including the annual Roasters Guild Retreat, group travel to coffee-growing regions, coffee roasting competitions, classes, and other educational and volunteer opportunities. The Roaster Guild of Europe, founded in 2015, offers similar opportunities.

In January 2017, the two guilds formed a joint unification committee—with two representatives from each heritage guild—to plan the new, unified guild's structure. Andi Trindle Mersch from the United States and Emilio Lopez Diaz from El Salvador represented the Roasters Guild (i.e., America); Joanna Alm from Sweden and

Konrad Oleksak from Poland represented the Roaster Guild of Europe. Emilio and Konrad were later replaced by Steven Lee from the United States and Filip Bartelak from Poland.

This committee met throughout 2017, twice in person and numerous times via electronic communication tools. During these meetings the committee: (1) chose a name, the Coffee Roasters Guild (CRG); (2) finalized mission and vision statements for the unified guild (see below); and (3) formulated the organizational structure of the new guild, which includes a governing body, seven committees and ample opportunities for volunteers. The CRG is expected to take the reins on February 1, 2018.



A cupping held at the Roaster Guild of Europe's Roaster Camp in Poland, 2016.

MISSION: To inspire a diverse coffee roasting community through the development and promotion of the roasting profession.

VISION: To be the most desired and thriving community of engaged members, attracting every coffee roaster worldwide.

These statements highlight two important themes. First is inclusion and diversity, which emphasizes the importance of diversity in leadership, committee structure and membership. The committee defines diversity in its broadest sense, across many spectrums, including background, geographic location, experience level and gender. Toward this end, the new guild will include an inclusion and diversity committee whose purpose is two-fold: (1) to ensure CRG leadership and committees represent the true diversity of the membership; and (2) to promote inclusion by affirmatively

seeking out leaders, committee members and volunteers who add to the diversity of the CRG, regardless of the demographics of the current membership base.

The second theme the committee highlights is creating shared community. Both guilds historically have embraced community building, providing members with rich opportunities to connect and learn from each other, and sharing ideas across geographic, economic, political and social boundaries. As Isa suggested, specialty coffee roasters across the globe tend to "geek out" on their craft and generally enjoy plugging into a community that shares their passion for quality, coffee, craft and engaged connection.

The CRG will be led by a 12-member advisory council, consisting of four officers—chair, vice chair, second vice chair and immediate past chair—and eight members-at-large. The inaugural council was selected by the unification committee and consists of two officers and four at-large members from each of the two heritage guilds. (See pg. 76 for the roster.) Thereafter, CRG members will vote for advisory council members. Each CRG member will have one vote. The seven committees will be led by at-large advisory council members.

As the guilds unify, it will be vitally important that we retain the deep regional and local connections forged under the legacy guilds. Regional or local subcommittees or other local organizational structures have not yet been defined, but the need to maintain value locally and create community, both regionally and locally, is obvious. The first CRG advisory council will explore this, possibly employing regional subcommittees or working in connection with current SCA chapters.

Unification produces many benefits, but none more important than a global network for research and education. We must "share creativity across borders and across oceans," says Isa.

It's a "researcher's dream," adds Vicente.

Through unification, the global community can join together in support of essential research. With the climate changing in ways that threaten coffee's future, the current pace of human ingenuity and technological achievement, and the rate at which new consumers are embracing specialty coffee around the world, an efficient network for sharing information across borders and hemispheres is invaluable. Together we enhance our ability to identify risks, engage research, implement solutions, share knowledge, and join hands in our mutual love and respect for coffee.

The SCA supports quality around the globe. It offers the Coffee Skills Program, an educational curriculum covering

CONTINUED ON PAGE 76 ►

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Joanna Alm, a member of the unification committee and the new Coffee Roasters Guild advisory council.



Isa Verschraegen, the SCA's guilds director.

COFFEE ROASTERS GUILD ADVISORY COUNCIL

The inaugural advisory council, listed below, was selected by the unification committee to consist of two officers and four at-large members from each of the two heritage guilds:

OFFICERS

Emilio Lopez Diaz, *chair*

Sonja Grant, *vice chair*

Jen Apodaca, *second vice chair*

Konrad Oleksak, *immediate past chair*

AT-LARGE MEMBERS

Filip Åkerblom

Joanna Alm

Tony Auger

Filip Bartelak

Steven Lee

Joe Marrocco

Morten Münchow

David Myers



all aspects of coffee production, available in eight languages. The education and research arms of the SCA are creating standards for quality and best practices. These groups will strive to achieve acceptable worldwide standards, but also will allow for and acknowledge regional and cultural differences.

As the guilds unite, language barriers must be overcome. The SCAE successfully managed language-based communication challenges for years. Because a majority of SCA members speak English, although not necessarily as their native language, for now the main educational events and lectures will continue to be offered in English; however, the CRG will ensure that volunteers and trainers are available to assist with translation.

Want more information? In August and November 2017, the unification committee presented webinars describing its process and the new structure. You can find them at scanews.coffee/crg.

Want to get involved? Great! Send an email to crg@sca.coffee. CRG needs you now!

FLOY ANDREWS is co-founder and CEO of Bay Area CoRoasters (CoRo), a shared coffee roasting and community space in Berkeley, California. In 2018, CoRo is opening the CoRo Coffee Room, a cafe featuring coffees roasted at CoRo by its various members. Andrews is also an attorney. Before entering the coffee industry, she was vice president, associate general counsel at Irvine Company. Through pure dedication, she managed to change directions mid-career and is feeling inspired by coffee and everyone making it. She's a licensed Q grader, has two kids and loves to get outdoors.

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