

PEOPLE PROFILES

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DANIEL HALALLA

Impact Roasters | Copenhagen, Denmark | [impactroasters.dk](http://impactroasters.dk)

In 2015, Daniel Halalla started Impact Roasters in partnership with his wife, who honed her passion for coffee while living in Ethiopia from 2011 to 2013. “We created Impact Roasters to bring coffee producers and coffee lovers closer to each other,” says Halalla.

Roasting and sourcing green coffee from Ethiopia are a big part of Halalla’s role, in addition to taking care of development projects in Ethiopia where the company invests part of its profits. Halalla has been roasting coffee for over four years in a commercial setting since they opened their first roastery inside the train station on Langgade Street in Copenhagen, but he says that he started roasting coffee at 5 years old in his mother’s kitchen.

“As I’m from the Sidamo coffee region, everybody around me was roasting coffee, so I did too,” says Halalla. “It was more of a familial activity than doing actual work for a business, and it was the Ethiopian way of roasting coffee for home use—in a pan. Roasting coffee was always a big part of my life.”

His advice to fellow roasters is to focus on high-quality green beans. “Having a solid centerpiece—the beans, in this case—is crucial for the sustainability of a business.” Moreover, “it’s important to know what the customers want and what the value is that we bring them,” he says. “We started out focusing on high-quality coffee because there is a high demand for it in Denmark—though specialty coffee is on the rise in general. We saw this as an opportunity to promote the Ethiopian coffees we are passionate about and to give the customers the coffee they want. Focusing on offering a good-quality product allows us to respond to this demand and ensure our business’s longevity by steadily meeting our customer’s needs. It’s essential to know the value we provide our customers, and in the coffee industry, it all starts with having good beans.”

Halalla says he wanted to have an open approach to roasting, so that people can come in and see the process whenever they want. “It’s important for us to have an open, transparent process, as our



aim when roasting coffee is to share a story,” he says. “We want to tell the story of the farmers we work with to our customers. We believe that allowing customers to see the roasting process is a way to show them the ‘behind the scenes’ of their favorite coffee, from how it was grown to its processing before landing in their cup. It’s not just showing them green beans turning dark: we hope it will give them the curiosity to think about the long journey of their beans and care more about all the people involved in making their delicious coffee.”

For Halalla, sustainability implies changing the way roasters trade with farmers. “One thing I fight for, and have been working on since the beginning, is the creation of a direct relationship with the farmers,” he says. “It is essential to discuss the quality of the coffee but also to share knowledge. We tell [the farmer] what we’re looking for in their beans, and they tell us their needs. We try to see how we can support them better, be it by offering higher wages or by investing in the creation of a school for their children.”

Sustainability is also directly tied to quality, says Halalla, and he believes it is crucial “to help increase the quality of the coffee beans by introducing more sustainable ways of growing coffee, or supporting farmers who are developing sustainable practices.”



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## STEPHEN ZINNERMAN

The Coffee Enthusiast | Fayetteville, North Carolina, USA  
 tcecoffee.com

Stephen Zinnerman works alongside his wife, Natasha, for their family-owned small-batch roastery in Fayetteville, North Carolina—The Coffee Enthusiast (TCE). Zinnerman is the head roaster and responsible for purchasing green coffee.

Zinnerman has been roasting since 2017, when the company was founded. He is a board member for the Coffee Coalition for Racial Equity (CCRE), and passionate about teaching environmental sciences and sustainability.

His advice to new roasters: “If the bug bites you, don’t wait! Get on out there and start learning,” says Zinnerman. “Find yourself as many different roasters to be a sponge under as you can. Hopefully their styles are different and even the markets within the industry they serve are different. It definitely has helped me



with finding my way and developing a style of my own. My wife has been very influential in my development as a roaster. She bakes and her approach is very methodical, but she’s not afraid

to step outside of her norm to try a different approach. She’s not afraid of the outcome of an unfamiliar approach. She’s always tasting everything and recognizes what to adjust afterwards. I think she’s amazing at that.”

When it comes to his roasting ritual, Zinnerman says he listens to a lot of Moonchild and Chromonici. “There are certain songs that seem to hit the queue when I roll into my zone and it’s like I can’t mess up!” Zinnerman says he always wears a Negro League baseball cap as well. “I look at it like, ‘I’m in the majors, playing for players like Oscar Charleston and ‘Cool Papa’ Bell, Josh Gibson, Chet Brewer or Charlie Chino Smith, who never made it to MLB, but were definitely more than good enough to play there. Sure, I roast on a 1-kilo machine and have to use a friend’s Loring to get bigger batches done—just like they had to play in the white teams’ stadiums when those teams had away games. But they brought out the crowds, both black and white. I want TCE to bring out the crowds too, but by roasting coffee well.”

For the Zinnermans, the most rewarding part of working in coffee has been the bonds that they’ve been able to create with others. “From in-person trade shows to the ‘pandemic era’ of coffee, with everything going virtual, [we gained] access to people and events that we’d otherwise have had to miss,” says Zinnerman. “We’ve met some friends for life in this industry.”

Still, there is room for growth in every industry. Zinnerman sees “an opportunity for increased diversity in the coffee industry.” This covers race and gender, he says, but goes beyond that aspect as well. “I see an opportunity for producers to be seen far more than just the typical one-day origin visits and the cliché coffee-in-dirty-hands photos. I see initiatives working toward coffee species’ sustainability and introduction, and a diversity in sizes of serious coffee roasters and other avenues of entry into the industry. I see coffee people, known and unknown, defining what is cool to *them*—and having a choice to pursue this passion without boundaries created by certain biased establishments.”

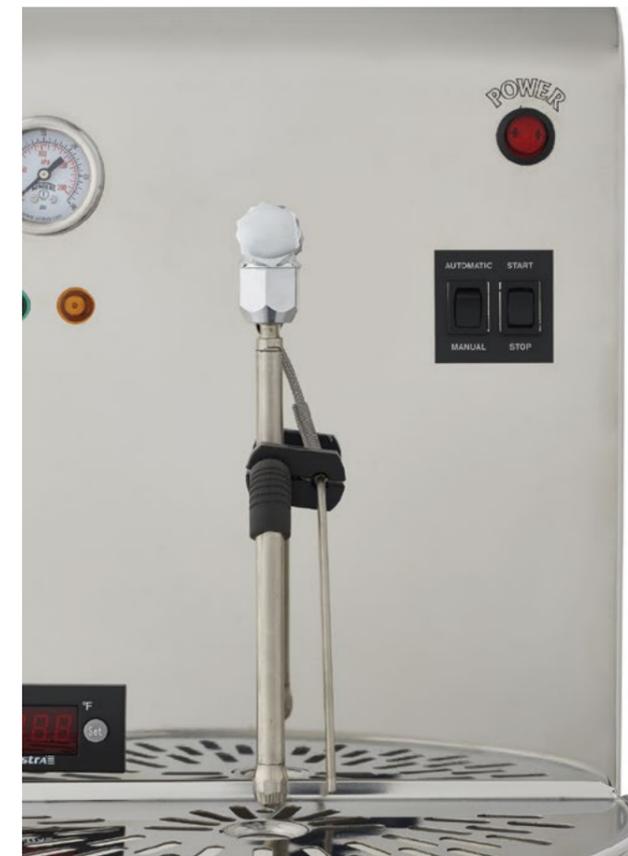
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