

# SEMMEANS BROS. RACING



## Help a bike team: Buy superb coffee and support farming families in Peru

By Grady Semmens

Ever wondered how the fragrant coffee beans that supply your morning jolt of caffeine made their way from the jungles of South America to your mug?

It turns out it's an amazing journey, as my old friend Jeff Boeda and I found out when we visited several organic coffee plantations in Peru last fall.

Deep in the cloud forests at the headwaters of the Amazon River are tiny villages perched on lush green hillsides where farmers grow some of the world's finest coffee. As guests of the Perunor Coffee Co-operative, Jeff, head coffee roaster for North Vancouver-based Bean Around the World, and I spent two days visiting remote villages that supply top-quality beans to coffee houses around the world. What we saw provided amazing insight into the amount of work that goes into a cup o' joe.

For starters, it took five hours driving on muddy 4x4 roads that were carved out of the cliffs to reach one of eight villages that are part of the Perunor network. Once at the village of Palto, we were greeted with handshakes and smiles by farmers who rarely have the chance to show their operations to outsiders and curious children who gawked at us like we were visitors from outer space. From there we hiked into the dense vegetation where coffee bushes that are planted and harvested by hand grow beneath the natural forest canopy. The so-called shade grown coffee has been certified "bird-friendly" by inspectors from the Smithsonian Institution because retaining native vegetation on plantations provides habitat for birds as well as myriad plant and animal species.



**Rough ride:** The road to the village of Palto is just the beginning of the remarkable journey coffee beans make from the farm to your cup.

Founded in 2000, the Perunor co-operative has resulted in a better quality of life for hundreds of families in some of the most rugged and remote regions of Peru. By banding together, they are able to negotiate fair prices for the fruits of their labour; share the costs associated with processing and shipping their

beans across the globe; gain access to training programs to ensure they are growing crops in the most environmentally-sustainable manner; and use profits to build new schools and other facilities for their villages.

“By learning new techniques they are becoming more productive and making more money, which is good for them and for their village,” Perunor’s Director Manuel Rojas says.



**Faces of Perunor:** Jeff Boeda got a close-up look at the source of his beans while visiting Dedicacion Vasquez’s plantation in the highlands of Peru (photo on left). He also dropped off crayons and other supplies at Palto’s village school with coffee broker Dave Cleve (right).

As cyclists who are fuelled by caffeine, my brother Tyler and I decided that we want to help Perunor as part of our bid to ride the TransRockies Challenge mountain bike race this summer. With the support of Bean Around the World, we are selling Perunor coffee beans in Calgary to offset some of the costs of racing in the 7-day, 600 kilometre race from Fernie, B.C. to Canmore, Alberta on Aug. 6-12. (*See race website: [www.transrockies.com](http://www.transrockies.com)*)

For the sweet price of \$15 per pound, you, your family and friends can purchase some of the tastiest, Fair Trade-certified coffee on Earth. In the process, you’ll also help Tyler and I take part in the longest and toughest mountain bike race in North America, as well as support Peruvian farmers who are trying to improve their communities and create a brighter and more sustainable future for their families. It’s a winning deal for everybody!

**Place your coffee order today by contacting Grady Semmens at Phone: (403) 807-1498 or Email: [gsemmens@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gsemmens@ucalgary.ca) or Tyler Semmens at Phone: (403) 606-0840 or Email: [tylarsemmens@hotmail.com](mailto:tylarsemmens@hotmail.com)**

**Thanks for your support!**



Grady



Tyler