

# TONY TAUSCH & EILEEN SCHWAB

community through coffee

words | photography  
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It's possible the ruby-throated hummingbird hovering at your feeder is fueling up for an epic flight to Guatemala's Los Andes Nature Reserve. Wintering in the cloud forest on the southern slope of Atitlán Volcano, she might rest in a tree where a resplendent quetzal is building a nest. Somewhere beneath the misty canopy, people are building a life for themselves as they harvest coffee beans for your next latte at Coffee Emporium. It's possible.

Because of Tony Tausch and Eileen Schwab's partnership with Olga Hazard, owner of Los Andes, many things are possible. Hazard's employees are paid well, and their families have access to clean water, electricity, a small store, and a medical clinic. Tausch and Schwab also support a thriving school in the rural village, where eager minds soak in the rare opportunity. Just as the creatures who call Los Andes home benefit from its link with neighboring reserves, the network of relationships that Tausch and Schwab cultivate makes communities stronger and your coffee transcendent.

"It starts in that cup. When someone is having our Guatemalan coffee in the morning, from that it trails down and explodes into this whole, big, beautiful tapestry of a village. That is the lifestyle we're supporting," Schwab confirms.

Partnering with family-owned farms that maintain sustainable methods and ethical pay is a long-standing commitment based as much on Schwab and Tausch's core values as their business model. Like Hazard, Mathew Mugo of Kenya and William McAlpin of Costa Rica are counted as friends of the couple, as are many others. Flying great distances to far-flung destinations enables Schwab and Tausch to become allies to their suppliers, learning and teaching, empowering and encouraging as they go.

Their personal connections make the world a touch smaller.

"I could send a text to Olga right now via WhatsApp, and she'd respond to me. It's pretty crazy. So with the advent of the cell phone and [the] internet, we can establish relationships that were [previously] only reserved for exporters and importers. It takes out a couple of middlemen," Tausch explains.

Preferring direct trade to fair trade means the quality of coffee and the quality of life for the suppliers is elevated. However, it doesn't translate to less expensive beans. The couple openly share process improvements with farm owners so that the owners can

cultivate a better product with larger profits—usually two to three times the fair trade price.

For this husband-and-wife team, selling great coffee with a clear conscience is the spring from which all else flows, and it starts at home with their own staff and community.

Tausch and Schwab purchased the Coffee Emporium in Hyde Park from its original owners in 1996 and the Over-the-Rhine cafe in 2002, only a year after riots of civil unrest seemed to cement the neighborhood's reputation as one of the nation's most dangerous. But they were willing to take a chance and invest in both the place and its people. Their approach may have taken longer and carried greater risk, but the return continues to surpass expectations and redefine the bottom line.

"Being in this for twenty-three years, you see when the economy is really good and when it's really bad. For some of our customers, we became their workplace. They'd come and open up their laptops, write their résumés. They needed a place to be connected to people," Schwab remembers.

Connecting with people and providing a space for others to do the same is what drew them into the business initially. Though Schwab was drinking coffee "out of the womb," Tausch was introduced later when the duo visited cafés while on a trip to California. Tausch was struck by the diversity of the crowds all enjoying the same brew. This experience informed their decision to allow each store to develop its own unique vibe, growing organically in the neighborhood where they're planted while also staying true to Coffee Emporium's core vision.

"The culture is [the way that it is] because of the kind of person that comes in. In our OTR store, we'll have minor celebrities







come in, maybe big celebrities, but we'll also have homeless people."

Providing training that transforms their staff into craftspeople is a priority for Tausch and Schwab that ties back to their mission of serving wonderful products while honoring the work of people halfway around the world. They reward the dedication of their employees as well, because they want them to feel fulfilled and appreciated.

Over two decades deep, Tausch and Schwab are still intimately involved with the business. On any given day, Schwab can be seen training a barista, stocking shelves, meeting with managers, or greeting regulars and first-timers alike with her beaming smile. Tausch spends the bulk of his time at their storage and roasting facility, where they have added a second Diedrich Roaster, with newer features and a larger capacity than their seventeen-year-old model. It had typically taken Tausch about fifteen minutes to roast seventy pounds. He recently set a record when he roasted and bagged one thousand pounds on a Sunday.

Beyond their daily duties, Tausch and Schwab also put in time building bridges. Historically, the coffee world has been largely patriarchal. Through efforts with the International Women's Coffee Alliance, they are engaging and working with more female owners. Angéle Ciza of Burundi is one such owner; product from her farm, Muramba Wet Mill, is the latest addition to Coffee Emporium's single-origin offerings. The couple relay Ciza's wisdom: "If you want to develop Burundi, you develop the women."

Working in Over-the-Rhine, I meander through its streets, rain or shine. When the breeze blows in the right direction, the aroma of roasting beans greets me. Peeking through the garage-style door of the roasting facility, I spy Tausch hard at work, coaxing maximum flavor with a perfect balance of heat and time. Both the fragrance and his presence are comforting. There is community here, and we're all a part of it. All of us. With everything that distracts and divides us, Coffee Emporium is a port in the storm, where we find rest and refreshment. As we celebrate bright and lively coffee and conversation, we celebrate each other.

Tracy Doyle Photography Makeup: Ari Victoria



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