

## More beans, please

**By Justin Beddall**  
Staff Reporter

A cup of fair-trade, organic coffee costs about 5 cents more than a Starbucks.

For third-world farmers who toil to produce the coffee beans, the price difference is much more than just a few pennies.

Just ask West Vancouver's Lloyd Bernhardt and Kim Schachte.

Four years ago, the couple traveled to Guatemala to adopt a child. During the adoption process, the husband and wife team stayed in Guatemala for several months and, after going on several coffee-region tours, witnessed the plight of the growers. Bernhardt says Guatemala's coffee growers stood out because it is one of the country's largest exports, yet farmers earn pennies for their work, see no return on their investment and often work in harmful conditions.

"That's when we started learning about the coffee trade," explained Bernhardt, who co-founded a successful software development company in Vancouver in the late 1980's and later worked for Apple in California, consulting on Quicktime.

"I've always enjoyed coffee but knew nothing about how it was grown and picked."

When the former Bowen Island residents returned to Vancouver, they decided to do something about the situation facing most third-world coffee farmers by starting the Ethical Bean Coffee Company - an organic, fair trade, coffee company that ensures small-scale farmers are paid a living wage for their efforts.

Ethical Bean relies on TransFair Canada, a transparent third party certification body for Fair Trade, to audit their supply chain.

TransFair Canada is the only Canadian affiliate of an international organization called Fair Trade Labeling Organizations (FLO) that registers and monitors producer organizations in the South.



**HUMAN BEANS - Kim Schachte and Lloyd Bernhardt with their children Sam and Mia.**

Bernhardt says supporting certified organic farms helps the environment, the end consumer and perhaps most importantly - the coffee farmers.

"It's a really good feeling to know that the supply chain is being properly looked after," said Bernhardt, adding, "It's hugely labour-intensive, it takes 4,000 beans to make one pound of coffee."

There are, Bernhardt estimates, approximately 25 million bean-farming families in the world, most of whom are not earning a wage that allows them to rise above poverty. Fair Trade-certified coffee is grown by more than 300 cooperatives, representing 550,000 small farmers and their families.

In these highly caffeinated times, the coffee bean is an extremely hot commodity - second only to oil, Bernhardt explained during a cellphone interview last weekend.

At the moment, quality coffee is trading globally at around 60 cents (US) per pound. Fair-Trade-certified coffee growers receive a minimum \$1.26 (US) per pound - making a huge difference in the standard of living for coffee producers and their families.

In order to qualify as Fair Trade-certified producers, the farmers must belong to a co-op that shares a processing plant and agree to have their beans audited on a regular basis. The farmers typically grow coffee in the shade of a taller forest canopy, Bernhardt explained.

The payoff for drinking organic, certified coffee is measured in dollars, and sense.

The farmers earn a decent living and their families have a better life.

For consumers, the payoff is equally beneficial: a great-tasting cup of coffee that is organically-grown.

Bernhardt says many countries still use harmful pesticides and herbicides like DDT which are extremely detrimental to the environment and the health of the farmers.

Ethical Bean only uses certified organic beans that promote the long-term health of the environment.

Despite living in a Java-saturated city like Vancouver, Bernhardt is confident that their beans compare with the best gourmet, coffee house beans.

And despite his recent success in the high-tech industry, Bernhardt says he and his wife are now totally committed to growing Ethical Bean in Vancouver.

Since starting Ethical Bean this past summer, Bernhardt's small roasting facility in Burnaby has been busy creating a variety of different farmer-friendly roasts along with help from the Coffee Missionary, Arron De Lazzer.

"My wife and I feel like we are making a difference in the world and to a community that is very personal to us because of our daughter," says Bernhardt. "We ensure our farmers earn a fair wage and offer great tasting coffee. What more could anyone want?"

When she's not busy raising their four-and-a-half-year-old Mia and one-year-old Sam, Kim Schachte works for Ethical Bean one day a week from home. A graphic designer by trade, she has designed the corporate identity for Ethical Bean and all the packaging for the beans.

And sales of certified fair trade, organic coffee in Canada continues to grow.

In 1998, 44,411 pounds were sold. In 2000, that number jumped to 350,000.

In addition to ensuring that coffee producers in Central America and, for that matter, around the world are getting paid fairly for their work, the couple is also concerned about the plight of children in Latin America.

This holiday season Ethical Bean is donating one dollar for every one-pound bag purchased to Child-Aid, a non-profit organization that provides literacy programs and scholarships for children in Latin America.

Bernhardt and Schachte are collecting cards and feedback from Child Aid throughout the campaign to show customers how they have helped. It only takes \$130 dollars to send a child to school in Guatemala for a year, yet most kids leave by Grade 4 to help out on the family farm. "We want to show people that they can make a difference as consumers."

-Ethical Bean can be delivered by Small Potatoes Urban Delivery, an organic grocery service. It can also be bought directly at a number of organic food stores and restaurants in B.C. Visit [www.ethicalbean.com](http://www.ethicalbean.com)

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