



EJO HEZA WOMEN-GROWN – part of KOPAKAMA COOPERATIVE



Region/Cooperative: Ejo Heza (means “bright tomorrow”) – women’s coffee; members KOPAKAMA cooperative. The Kopakama cooperative is independent and cooperatively owned. Founded in 1998.

Parent coop members: 1024

Women’s sub-group members: 400, established in 2011.

Location: Rutsiro district, western province. Beautiful views of Lake Kivu.

Certification: Fair Trade, Rainforest compliant

Coop Quality: Lean at Origin trained

Variety: Arabica

Grade: A1

Altitude: 5,200-6,500 ft/ 1,600-2,000m

Processing: Fully washed

Screen size: 15+

Arrival in the US (both coasts): November

Cup score: 86 Flavor notes: Complex. Sugar plum and pink lemonade fragrance, maple syrup, winey, plum aroma. After the break, flavor has wine and berry, vanilla.

Artisan Coffee Imports, LLC, 1550 Westfield, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

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Ejo Heza Story:

Since 2016 Artisan Coffee Imports has been importing and promoting the incredible Ejo Heza women and their coffee. Ruth Ann first arrived at Kopakama cooperative in May 2016 as a consultant giving trainings. (She was living in Rwanda at the time, working on a coffee research project.) Ejo Heza leaders were in the training and, during one of the breaks, guided Ruth Ann to visit their community coffee plot. There, Ruth Ann saw how they were doing controlled experiments! Half the plot was cultivated using traditional techniques, the other half is where the women were testing new weeding and mulching techniques that might save them labor (which = costs). Seeing this innovation was what “sold” Ruth Ann on trying the coffee. The incredible taste and 86+ score did the rest!

The relationship between Artisan and Ejo Heza has developed in significant ways since then. In 2020, just before the start of the COVID pandemic, Artisan and Kopakama cooperative signed an MOU to start a quality control internship, where Artisan paid the living expenses for an intern who would work with the cooperative with no salary, two days a week. Grace Izerwe is the person who inspired Artisan to create this internship. Even through the challenges of the pandemic, Grace did her best as an intern and succeeded in making improvements on behalf of farmers and the cooperative. In March 2021, she applied for a new opening at Kopakama. She scored the highest on the exam and was selected by the cooperative board as the new Chief Production Officer.

Artisan is proud of this story and the small role we can play in helping cooperatives gain access to new talent. At the same time we believe we are helping young, highly-skilled and educated females in Rwanda, who have a passion for coffee, to get their “toe in the door” and launch their career in coffee.

Importantly, the premiums that Artisan pays the members of Ejo Heza has helped the group grow. In 2016 there were about 220 members. Today there are over 400! Good news travels fast among the women in the area.

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