



Post-Harvest Processing in Indian Coffee: Enhancing Quality from Farm to Cup

*Kommana Sai Sirisha

M.Sc. Agricultural Entomology, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India

*Corresponding Author's email: skkommana98@gmail.com

India, the sixth-largest coffee producer globally, is known for its flavorful Arabica and Robusta beans, largely cultivated in Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. Post-harvest processing plays a pivotal role in maintaining bean quality, improving export value, and ensuring farmers' profitability. Improper or inconsistent practices can lead to downgrading in the global market — making this step crucial in the value chain.

Major Coffee Processing Methods in India

1. Wet (Washed) Processing: Commonly used for Arabica beans. Involves depulping, fermentation, washing, drying, and hulling. Produces clean, bright beans with balanced acidity. Used in Chikmagalur and Kodagu regions.
2. Dry (Natural) Processing: Often used for Robusta in Wayanad (Kerala) and parts of Tamil Nadu. Whole cherries are sun-dried. Requires strict drying control to avoid mold. Flavor is fruity, full-bodied — ideal for espresso blends.
3. Honey Processing: Semi-washed method. Retains mucilage during drying. Balances fruitiness and clarity in flavor. Increasingly practiced in Bababudangiri region, Karnataka.
4. Eco-Pulping and Sustainable Innovations: Uses less water than traditional fermentation. Suitable for tribal farmers in Eastern Ghats (Andhra Pradesh & Odisha). Encouraged by Coffee Board of India and NGOs for sustainability.

Why Processing Matters

Ensures uniform bean size and moisture. Avoids defects like sour beans, black beans, and moldy flavors. Influences cup score, crucial for specialty coffee export. Poor processing can lead to price penalties or shipment rejection.

Challenges Faced by Indian Coffee Growers

Unpredictable monsoon affecting sun drying. Lack of solar dryers or mechanical dryers in tribal belts. Limited awareness about best processing practices. Market dependency on intermediaries for hulling and grading.

Successful Approaches

1. Ramesh Gowda, Chikmagalur: Shifted to eco-pulping and solar drying, reduced mold and earned 20% higher price in auction.
2. Tribal cooperative in Araku Valley: With NGO support, began using raised beds for drying → better flavor & consistent exports to Europe.
3. Women-led group in Wayanad: Adopted honey processing and branded their coffee locally, increasing local sales and visibility.

Way Forward

Promote training and capacity building on post-harvest techniques. Government should subsidize solar dryers and pulping units. Encourage formation of processing cooperatives to reduce cost. Boost branding of region-specific coffee with traceable processing.

Conclusion

Post-harvest processing, though often overlooked, is a crucial determinant of coffee quality. By modernizing these steps and empowering farmers with tools and training, India can not only preserve the flavor integrity of its coffee but also uplift the income and reputation of its growers on the global stage.