

Civet coffee's unique flavor linked to fat composition

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance

Why in news?

Recent scientific study in Kerala, shows distinct difference in civet coffee's fatty acid methyl esters and total fat content when compared to naturally harvested robusta beans.

Key findings of the study

- **Elevated fat content** - The study found that beans excreted by wild civets had a significantly higher fat content—8.4% compared to 5.9% in conventionally harvested beans.
- Higher fat content can contribute to a coffee's aroma and overall taste.
- **Unique fatty acid compounds** - It contained higher concentrations of certain fatty acids, particularly caprylic and capric acid methyl esters, compounds that are known to enhance aroma and mouthfeel.
- **Natural fermentation** - The civet's digestive enzymes and gut microbiome, which includes the Gluconobacter bacteria, act as a biological fermenter.
- This process alters their chemical structures and enriching their sensory profile.
- **Effect on bitterness** - Researchers also observed lower levels of protein and caffeine in the civet-processed beans, which could contribute to the coffee's smoother, less bitter taste.

Civet Coffee

- Civet processed robusta coffee - popularly known Kopi Luwak.
- **Region** - Karnataka.
- This coffee is commonly known as the **most rare and expensive coffee** in the world, due to its unique production method.
- It is produced from coffee beans that have passed through the digestive system of the Asian palm civet.

- The animal eats ripe coffee cherries, digests the pulp, and excretes the intact beans.
- These beans are collected, cleaned, and roasted to make this coffee.
- **Criticism** - It is also controversial, with animal welfare experts raising concerns that some producers keep civets in battery-style conditions.

*India is Asia's 3rd **largest** producer & exporter of coffee.*

Quick Fact

Asian palm civet

- **Scientific name** - *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*
- It is a **small nocturnal mammal** native to South and Southeast Asia.
- **Other names** - common palm civet, toddy cat, or musang.
- **Family** - Viverridae
- **Appearance** - Civets have a pointed snout, small ears, and a long, furry tail.
- Their fur varies by species, but it is often buff or grayish with a pattern of black spots or stripes.
- **Diet** - As omnivores, civets feed on a diverse diet that includes fruits, insects, small mammals, birds, eggs, and reptiles.
- **Habitat** - They are highly adaptable and thrive in both primary and secondary forests, as well as suburban gardens and plantations with mature fruit trees.
- **Coverage** - Their range spans from India and Sri Lanka to China, the Philippines, and the Indonesian islands.
- **Conservation** -
 - IUCN - Least Concern
 - Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972 - Schedule II



References

1. [The Hindu | Findings of Central University of Kerala - Civet coffee](#)
2. [Times of India | Study about civet processed robusta coffee](#)