

After a terrible cup of joe in the office, a founder decided to bring African coffee traditions stateside

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. When do you drink coffee or tea? What kind(s) do you drink?
2. In your culture, is there a certain way coffee and / or tea are prepared? Describe it and explain any rituals that are part of it.
3. How have coffee and tea influenced social norms and rituals across different cultures?

2 Key words

a. Choose the correct word to match each definition below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

1. a practice or way of doing something that is common in a particular society or place
a. custom b. immigrate c. loan
2. to give or add something, such as money or effort, to help achieve a goal
a. startup b. contribute c. trade
3. money borrowed that must be paid back with interest
a. loan b. premium c. source
4. the action of buying, selling or exchanging goods and services
a. equity b. consumer c. trade
5. to move to a country from another country with the intention of living there permanently
a. source b. customer c. immigrate
6. a new business that is just beginning to operate, usually less than three years old
a. loan b. startup c. custom
7. a person who buys and uses products from a business
a. consumer b. revenue c. immigrate
8. the place, person or thing from which something comes from or can be found
a. source b. startup c. trade

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9. the income that a business or government receives, especially from selling goods or services
a. premium b. revenue c. loan
10. to make certain something is safe or to obtain something firmly
a. equity b. source c. secure
11. of higher quality or greater value compared to others; extra money paid for something that is of higher quality
a. revenue b. premium c. source
12. fairness and justice in the way people are treated; in business, it can also mean ownership in a company
a. startup b. secure c. equity

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. Customers are willing to pay a(n) _____ for specialty coffee drinks made from high-quality beans.
2. The _____ of enjoying a cup of coffee has become deeply ingrained in American culture, with coffee shops in nearly every town and city.
3. The café's _____ increased after it introduced a new line of cakes and pastries.
4. Today's _____ are more aware of where their coffee comes from and prefer brands that support fair trade.
5. The entrepreneur worked hard to _____ a deal with a large supermarket to sell her coffee.
6. The company focused on _____ by making sure women farmers received equal pay for their work.

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7. The coffee farmer received a(n) _____ from a local community bank to buy new equipment for her farm.
8. The coffee is proud to _____ all its ingredients from local organic farmers.

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Kahawa 1893 prioritizes small producers and premium beans, while also offering consumers a 'virtual pot' to support its suppliers

Claire Wang

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- 1 When Margaret Nyamumbo was a child in Kenya, she learned about a custom on her grandfather's coffee farm: women would gather around a table and drop money into a large pot. This "table banking" system allowed anyone who contributed to later receive funds as a small loan. This helped women in the coffee trade support one another. In Kenya, women provide 90 per cent of the labor on coffee farms but own just 1 per cent of the land.
- 2 Ten years after immigrating to the US, Nyamumbo launched her own coffee startup, Kahawa 1893. "I thought, what if we could have consumers pitch into this 'virtual pot' and then farmers can have money to go around?" she said. Kahawa 1893 is named after the Swahili word for coffee and the year commercial coffee production began in Africa. The company sources beans directly from Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Congo. Buyers scan a QR code on each bag of beans to contribute to the tip fund, and the company matches these funds. So far, they have raised 45,000 US dollars. With the match, 90,000 US dollars have gone to more than 500 women and girls in Africa.
- 3 Kahawa 1893 quickly gained popularity in the US. In 2021, the company became the first Black woman-owned coffee brand to be sold at Trader Joe's. By 2023, the startup generated 3 million US dollars in revenue. An appearance on Shark Tank helped Nyamumbo secure a deal with Keurig.
- 4 Kahawa 1893's launch happened at the same time American coffee culture shifted towards small producers and premium beans. Specialty coffee makes up 50 per cent of the global value of traded coffee and has driven US coffee consumption to a 20-year high. The coffee market, currently valued at 28 billion US dollars, is expected to surpass 33 billion US dollars by 2029.
- 5 Nyamumbo remains focused on lifting up the farmers. "Our focus on equity means we lose some short-term profitability," she said, "but we see this strategy working in the long term."
- 6 How did you come up with the idea for your company?
- 7 After completing my MBA at Harvard, I worked at an investment bank on Wall Street. I was keen to build something tangible that could directly impact people. I was inspired by my days at the office, where I drank very bad coffee. I knew we had really good coffee in Africa and I wanted to make it more conveniently available.
- 8 Can you explain the tipping strategy on your website?
- 9 In the fair trade model, we pay a premium that goes back to farming communities. Tipping is a similar way to give money back to farmers. Right now we have a QR code on the back of our packaging. So far we've helped around 500 women, 200 in Kenya. People have contributed close to 45,000 US dollars, which we matched for a total of 90,000 US dollars.
- 10 The specialty coffee market rests on the idea that consumers will pay a premium for quality beans. How do you balance quality with price?
- 11 Prices change in the current system, so farmers get the same low price regardless of quality, and they'll not invest in quality processing. However, we buy from small farmers year after year and work with them to invest and improve quality. That means we're able to make investments appealing by promising them a higher price. Kahawa 1893 pays farmers nearly double the minimum fair trade price of 1.80 US dollars per pound of coffee.
- 12 Kahawa 1893 has made more than 7 million US dollars since your appearance on Shark Tank. What's next?
- 13 My dream is to open a coffee shop. I'd love to have stores in different cities, starting in New York City – but definitely Kenya, in Nairobi, as well. It would be fun to bring the tipping system to the store. If someone tips the barista, for instance, some of that will go to the farmer.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. Where did Margaret Nyamumbo learn about table banking?
2. What percentage of labor on coffee farms is provided by Kenyan women, and what percentage of land do they own?
3. Where does the company's name come from?
4. From which four African countries does Kahawa 1893 source coffee beans?
5. How does a buyer give to Kahawa 1893's 'tip fund'?
6. How much money has the fund raised and how many women and girls has it helped?
7. What 'first' did Kahawa 1893 achieve in 2021?
8. How much revenue did Kahawa 1893 generate in 2023?
9. What inspired Margaret Nyamumbo to start her coffee business?
10. What is Nyamumbo's dream for her company?

4 Key language

a. Complete the sentences using the correct phrasal verb from the wordpool.

lifting up

give back

pitch in

go around

invest in

1. She wondered if consumers could _____ to a 'virtual pot'.
2. The tip fund helps farmers have enough money to _____.
3. Nyamumbo remains focused on _____ the farmers.
4. Tipping is a similar way to _____ money _____ to farmers.
5. They will not _____ quality processing without support.

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b. Match each phrasal verb to its definition. Use the sentences above for context clues to help you.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. lift up | a. to put money, effort or time into something to receive a benefit or return |
| 2. invest in | b. to return something to its source or to contribute positively to a community or cause |
| 3. pitch in | c. to help someone rise to a better position or condition |
| 4. go around | d. to contribute or help |
| 5. give back | e. to distribute or be enough for everyone |

c. Write two personalised sentences using the phrasal verbs above.

1. _____
2. _____

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- 'Fair trade helps farmers and artisans to be empowered to help themselves'.
- 'Fair trade is not charity. It is simply a just, equitable way to do business'.
- 'Customers care about how products are made and who makes them'.

6 In your own words

a. Do some research on fair trade companies. Choose one and collect information about it. Answer these questions.

- What does *fair trade* mean for this company?
- What are some of the social, economic and environmental standards that are part of their fair trade?
- How does it help people?
- Why are their fair-trade practices needed?
- Who are the customers, and what do they think of the service?
- How is their business growing?

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b. Report your findings to the class and share the facts you learned, as well as your opinions.

Here are some phrases to help you give reasons during your report.

- *The company focuses on ...*
- *Their business model is ...*
- *The producers are ...*
- *as a result of ...*
- *considering that ...*
- *therefore ...*
- *which led / contributed to ...*
- *resulting in ...*
- *It attracts customers by ...*