



# RENAISSANCE

Marcala, Honduras May–July 2014

From Carly, Green Coffee Buyer for Equal Exchange:

Visiting our trading partner COMSA in Marcala, Honduras this past fall, I was inspired.

The entrepreneurial spirit and “renaissance” philosophy at COMSA struck me as unique, and that spirit shines through in their incredible work in expanding organic practices.

### Exhibit A: Coconuts

COMSA farmer (and extension team\* member) Oscar Omar Alonso introduced me to an original idea in organic farming. Oscar’s friend sold fresh coconut water and had accumulated a huge quantity of coconut shells that he wanted to send to a dump. Oscar instead took a truckload to his own farm. He did not yet have a plan for the shells but he hated to see fibrous, organic material be dumped as trash. He used the internet and his wits to come up with a plan. Oscar experimented with the coconut shells as a natural means of moisture control and water storage. He distributed them around the

base of his coffee plants, to absorb and store water in the rainy season, which the plants could then draw from once the rains stopped. Amazingly, this plan worked!

### Exhibit B: “Microorganisms of the Mountain”

COMSA actively encourages the purposeful reproduction of microorganisms. These microorganisms (in Spanish, microorganismos de montaña) are a mixture of bacteria and fungus that live in the soil. They help to decompose organic material, fix nitrogen, and recycle nutrients the plants need. Propagating these microscopic organisms is a natural and effective means of investing in the health of the soil and the productivity of the farms.

\*extension team = technically trained staff in the steps of organic production. People who are trained in different organic production methods then replicate those techniques and strategies in the field and for real world application on farms. Extensionists typically live at least part of their time in the production area or have farms of their own in the area.

**Top left:** In the left half of this photo, you can see very few shade trees with the darker coffee trees. The farmer is experimenting with the level of shade that will maximize production as well as farm health. The right side shows a mix of different levels and varieties of shade trees.  
**Top right:** Oscar Omar examines the soil quality at the base of one of his coffee trees.

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**GROUP**  
COMSA (Cafe Organico de Marcala)

**ORIGIN**  
Marcala, Honduras

**VARIETALS**  
Bourbon, Caturra, Catuai,  
Pacamara, Ihcafe90

**ELEVATION**  
1100-1600 MASL

**ROAST**  
Medium

**PROFILE**  
Aromas of maple and spice  
with layered flavor notes  
of chocolate fudge and raspberry,  
a bright acidity and smooth  
velvety mouthfeel.

