

# The Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony



The Ethiopian coffee ceremony is held for many reasons. First, it sets aside time to prepare and share the coffee Ethiopians love three times a day: in the morning, during the afternoon rest, and in the evening. It accompanies the main meal of the day, either before or after food is served.

Second, it displays hospitality, honoring visitors, people of status or any guests. It provides an opportunity to catch up on community news, and to settle disputes in the family circle or with the help of the respected elders. It offers recognized periods of leisure for hard-working people. It unites the family and purifies their home.

## The Ceremony

The family, with or without guests, gathers together. Men and women sit together, though elders, honored guests, and men have preference in using chairs, while others sit on the floor. Incense is lit, and the hostess begins the ceremony by roasting coffee beans in an open pan, which is then passed around before assemblage so that the aroma can be savored. The guests bless the hosts and all the participants, from the oldest to the youngest—and can express blessings for anyone else they wish.

While the hostess grinds the roasted beans into granules with a pestle, light refreshments are served. These may consist of plain *injera* (pancake-like bread made of *teff* flour), loaf bread, roasted grains, or *kolo*, roasted grains. The ground coffee and water are boiled together in a ceramic coffee pot. When done, the coffee is poured into small cups and sweetened according to the taste of guests and family members.

The cups are taken to the guests by the youngest child able to perform this task. The guests are served in order of their ages, starting with the honored elders. Status and gender may also be considered. Three rounds of coffee are drunk, with the cups collected and rinsed between rounds. When the third cup has been drunk, the guests thank the hostess, rise and leave.