

DAILY NEWS

It's a killer cup of coffee

BY JEANETTE SETTEMBRE
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These are dangerous grounds. Colombia has some of the highest-quality coffee in the world — but the choicest beans are often on land controlled by guerillas and drug kingpins who don't welcome buyers from Starbucks.

Enter Steven Sutton, founder of Devocion Coffee, who is dedicated to putting the world's most hard-to-get beans into your morning cup. Drugs, cartels, murders and gang violence in guerilla red zones, such as Caldas and Amazonia, are just another day at the office for Sutton's growers.

"You won't find these coffees anywhere else," says Sutton,

whose cafe, Devocion Botica del Cafe, opened Saturday in Williamsburg.

"It's really hard-core," adds Sutton, who has been working in relatively safe Bogota since 2006. "Farmers won't take me to every single farm because if the guerillas catch us they'll kill us both."

Sutton's coffee consigliere on the ground in Colombia is Nelson Vargas, who spends around 60 hours a week surveying more than 400 tiny farms growing varieties like the rare Ethiopian Geisha and Toro, a bean from the Santander region with notes of cacao, vanilla, cherry and almond. Ninety percent of the coffee is purchased in red zones.

Vargas flies the beans to Sutton's former meat-processing plant on Grand St., where they

are roasted and served — in coffee drinks or in bags for home use.

The 3,600-square-foot roastery and cafe boasts exposed brick, a stunning atrium with coffee plants, leather couches, Colombian posters, a pour-over bar and two hand-pulled espresso machines.

"The Brooklyn consumer is really savvy (about) these high-end products," says Sutton, who now sells 150 tons of coffee each year in the United States and Colombia and supplies coffee to restaurants including Del Posto and Hillstone.

Devocion Botica del Cafe, 69 Grand St., at Wythe Ave., (718) 285-6180.

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Coffee's a risky business for Steven Sutton: "Farmers won't take me to every single farm ... if the guerillas catch us they'll kill us both."

ANDREW SUTTY/WNYC