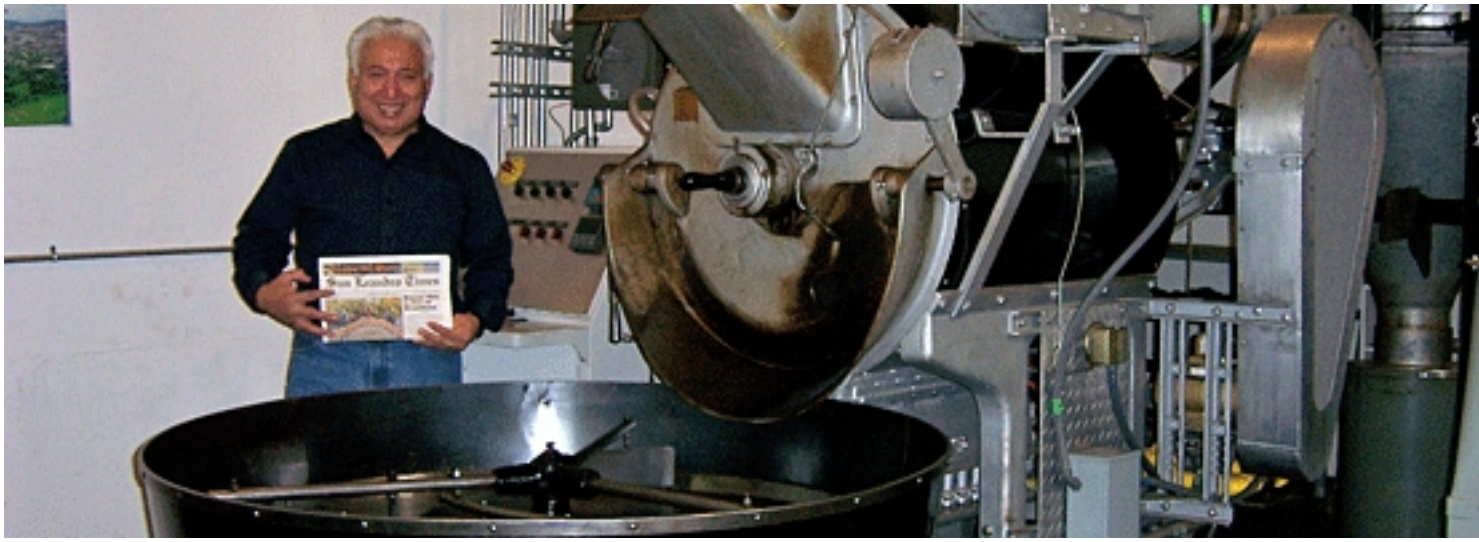

PHOTO BY LINDA SANDSMARK

Milton Coreas of Sunrise Coffee uses this roaster, which handles 100 pounds every 15 minutes, to customize blends for customers.

By Linda Sandsmark

San Leandro Times

A custom coffee roasting company is thriving in San Leandro, with clients ranging from restaurants and coffee shops to movie stars.

Sunrise Coffee Company, a three-employee enterprise with a tasting room and 100-lb. roaster, is small and nimble enough to fill custom orders quickly.

“Ever since I was a child in El Salvador, I’ve been around coffee. I grew up in a small town surrounded by coffee plantations and coffee mills,” says Sunrise’s affable owner, Milton Coreas. “I moved to the U.S. 25 years ago and have worked with coffee here for the past 20 years.”

Coreas started working in the U.S. coffee industry right here in San Leandro at a company that produced concentrated coffees. Then 17 years ago, he decided to strike out on his own. He opened his first shop on Williams Street, eventually moved to a larger location on Aurora Drive, then relocated to Burroughs Avenue two years ago.

His current location has a pleasant front room, similar to a tasting room at a winery. The roaster and beans are located in the back.

“I always wanted to have some place for people to taste my coffee,” he says. “My neighbors like it that we’re here, and we’ll sell our beans to anybody. But we mostly concentrate on coffee shops, the mom and pop businesses.”

Coreas really knows coffee inside and out. He buys green coffee beans from all around the world, including Peru, Brazil, Java, New Guinea, Indonesia, Central and South America. He can tell you which beans from which locations have more acidity and caffeine, and which are milder. He even owns a small coffee plantation in El Salvador, and knows the pickers who work there.

His coffee is so good he even received a letter of praise from actor Clint Eastwood. One of Sunrise Coffee’s clients sent Eastwood some coffee as a gift, and Eastwood was so impressed he tracked the company down and wrote to them.

“We get more accounts from referrals like that than anywhere,” says Coreas. “We focus on getting the best for our customers. We care for them, and we’ll turn the roasting machine right on for them if they need it quickly. Everything is fresh. We roast by order. Tell me what you’re looking for in a coffee and I’ll work with you until you’re pleased — stronger, lighter, whatever.”

Contrast Sunrise's 100-lb. roaster (which roasts 100 pounds every 15 minutes, or 400 pounds per hour) with the typical roaster in a large company, which roasts 4,000 pounds per hour. Sunrise's smaller shop is an asset, because it can create unique blends for each client. Coreas welcomes customers to see the facilities, including the vide variety of beans from which his coffees are made.

The company was also lucky enough to register a catchy name for its website: BuenosDiasCoffee.com. Anyone may order from the website (or in person at the store). The website features organic, decaf, specialty and flavored coffees from $9 to $12 per pound.

Sunrise Coffee is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is located at 1995 Burroughs Ave., next to Olsson Plumbing and Heating (off Wicks Boulevard). For more information, call 483-3969 or send an e-mail to MiltonCoreas@gmail.com.