# History of coffee in the Americas

Gabriel de Clieu brought coffee seedlings to Martinique in the Caribbean circa 1720. Those sprouts flourished and 50 years later there were 18,680 coffee trees in Martinique enabling the spread of coffee cultivation to Haiti, Mexico and other islands of the Caribbean. The territory of Santo Domingo (now Hispaniola, comprising Haiti and the Dominican Republic) saw coffee cultivated from 1734, and by 1788 it supplied half the world's coffee. Coffee had a major influence on the geography of Latin America. The French colonial plantations relied heavily on African slave laborers. However, the dreadful conditions that the slaves worked in on coffee plantations were a factor in the soon-to-follow Haitian Revolution. The coffee industry never fully recovered there.

Coffee also found its way to the Isle of Bourbon, now known as Réunion, in the Indian Ocean. The plant produced smaller beans and were deemed a different variety of arabica known as *var. Bourbon*. The Santos coffee of Brazil and the Oaxaca coffee of Mexico are the progeny of that Bourbon tree. Circa 1727, the King of Portugal sent Francisco de Mello Palheta to French Guinea to obtain coffee seeds to become a part of the coffee market. Francisco initially had difficulty obtaining these seeds, but he captivated the French Governor's wife and she sent him enough seeds and shoots to commence the coffee industry of Brazil. In 1893, the coffee from Brazil was introduced into Kenya and Tanzania (Tanganyika), not far from its place of origin in Ethiopia, 600 years prior, ending its transcontinental journey.

Meanwhile, coffee had been introduced to Brazil in 1727, although it’s cultivation did not gather momentum untill independence in 1822. After this time, massive tracts of rainforest were cleared first from the vicinity of Rio and later São Paulo for coffee plantations.

After the Boston Tea Party of 1773, large numbers of Americans switched to drinking coffee during the American Revolution because drinking tea had become unpatriotic.

Cultivation was taken up by many countries in the latter half of the 19th century, and almost all involved the large-scale displacement and exploitation of the indigenous Indian people. Harsh conditions led to many uprisings, coups and bloody suppression of peasants. The notable exception was Costa Rica, where lack of ready labor prevented the formation of large farms. Smaller farms and more egalitarian conditions ameliorated unrest over the 19th and 20th centuries.

In the 1930s Brazil took off as the major producer of coffee, leaving behind their early yerba mate industry, which Argentina then took over.