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**BUSINESS**  
ON THE JOB / PEOPLE WHO MAKE TUCSON RUN

**No ordinary joe is the goal at specialty coffee company**

By Jennifer Tramm

SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

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At a recent farmers market on the grounds of the University of Arizona, the rich aroma of roasting coffee beans awakens the senses.

It's the smell of success for Tucsonans Scott and Denise Gilliland.

The Gillilands own Adventure Coffee Roasting, a Tucson specialty coffee company that started out as a hobby to satisfy their own taste for fine java.

The couple participates in four farmers markets a week, where they brew up three kinds of coffee for sampling.

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At the recent market at the UA, the Gillilands set up two tables, a scale, big plastic boxes of roasted beans and bags and bags of coffee. They roasted coffee on the spot in a roaster perched on the back of their red pickup truck.

The couple also sells online at [www.adventurecoffee.com](http://www.adventurecoffee.com), which also lists their market appearances.

The Gillilands buy and roast only certified organic coffee beans, roasting 3,000 pounds of coffee each month.

They anticipate a recently acquired, state-of-the-art roaster will enable them to roast 15,000-18,000 pounds of coffee per month once it's up and running.

Since they launched the business in the fall of 2004, sales have doubled each year, Scott Gilliland said. He expects the same this year, though he declined to cite exact figures.

At least 95 percent of that is certified as "fair trade," which means more of the money goes to the grower and the workers receive better treatment than at most farms that are not so certified.

"I knew it would cost me more, but it just feels right," Scott said. "If we'll buy it, then producers will grow it."

Adventure sells whole and ground coffees from Africa, South and Central America, the Far East and the Mexican state of Chiapas. The company also sells special blends and decaffeinated coffees.

The company sells its coffee online for \$11.50 to \$13.50 a pound, with slightly lower prices at markets.

The Gillilands, who have three grown children, also sell coffee wholesale. They create special, exclusive blends for local businesses and restaurants, including Miraval Life in Balance spa and the recently opened Vin Tabla restaurant.

The Gillilands, originally from New Jersey, became enamored with gourmet coffee in 1982 on a trip to Quebec.

The two had gone to a little French Canadian café, where they had coffee. Back home, they had been drinking Maxwell House. The difference was dramatic.

"The coffee was so rich and tasteful," Scott recalled.

They asked the waiter what it was. "I assumed it was some weird French thing," he

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Adventure Coffee Roasting co-owner Scott Gilliland was drawn to his business by his love of coffee. The quest for a fine cup of java morphed into a specialty coffee company whose products are sold at assorted farmers markets in the Tucson area, as well as online.

PHOTOS BY BENJIE SANDERS / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

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**PROFILE**

Name: Scott and Denise Gilliland

Ages: 48 and 46, respectively

Job: Owners, Adventure Coffee Roasting

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said, but the waiter told them the café got it from a small roaster in Vermont.

When they got home, Scott and Denise learned that there were small boutique roasters all over the country. Trying new coffees from these companies became a hobby.

Later, Scott learned to roast coffee in San Francisco. It became a passion. It wasn't until last year, however, that the Gillilands made the break from part-time to full-time roasters when Scott left his software-company job in July.

Jennifer English, a local radio show host and owner of spice shop Flavorbank, says she sells a special blend Scott made exclusively for her shop because "it's singularly the best coffee I've ever had."

She said that when she met Scott she recognized his enormous passion for getting every detail right.

"I just met a kindred spirit," English said, recalling how Scott patiently answered listeners' questions on her radio show about food and wine.

The Gillilands' oldest child, Jena McLaughlin, 25, grew up around good coffee.

"Whenever I smell coffee, I think of them," she said of her parents.

"I think it's great that it's all organic," she said. "I don't have to worry about my daughter being around pesticides."

• *Jennifer Tramm is a University of Arizona student who is apprenticing at the Star. Contact her at 573-4181 or starapprentice@azstarnet.com.*



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