

Elephant Dung Used To Make Black Ivory Coffee

Now dis is why yuh can't go wrong wid Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee.

A herd of elephants is being used to produce some of the world's most expensive coffee. The exotic new brew, trumpeted as earthy in flavour and smooth on the palate, is made from beans eaten by a herd of 20 Thai elephants and plucked a day later from their dung. A gut reaction inside the elephant creates what the founder of Black Ivory Coffee calls the coffee's unique taste. "When an elephant eats coffee, its stomach acid breaks down the protein found in coffee, which is a key factor in bitterness," said Blake Dinkin, a 42-year-old Canadian who has spent just under £190,000 developing the coffee. "You end up with a cup that's very smooth without the bitterness of regular coffee. "My theory is that a natural fermentation process takes place in the elephant's gut," said Mr Dinkin. "That fermentation imparts flavours you wouldn't get from other coffees." The result is reported to be similar in civet coffee, or Kopi Luwak, another hugely expensive variety extracted from the excrement of the weasel-like civet. But the elephants' massive stomach provides a bonus. At the jungle retreat where the herd is kept, conservationists were initially sceptical about the idea. "My initial thought was about caffeine - won't the elephants get wired on it or addicted to coffee?" said John Roberts, director of elephants at the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation, a refuge for rescued elephants. "As far as we can tell there is definitely no harm to the elephants." It now earns 8% of the coffee's total sales, which go towards the herd's healthcare. Before presenting his proposal to the foundation, Mr Dinkin said he worked with a Canadian-based veterinarian that ran blood tests on zoo elephants showing they don't absorb any caffeine from eating raw coffee cherries. "I thought it was well worth a try because we're looking for anything that can help elephants to make a living," said Mr Roberts, who estimates the cost of keeping each elephant is about £625 a month. The coffee costs £312 per pound, which makes it among the priciest in the world - for now, only the wealthy or well-travelled have access to the cuppa which was launched last month at a few luxury hotels in remote corners of the world.