Design Team, Recreational Foods and Drinks Product Design Dept., R&D Division UCC Ueshima Coffee Co., Ltd.
Kato-san
Factory Manager, Rokko Island Factory, SCM Division UCC Ueshima Coffee Co., Ltd.
Kobayashi-san
Coffee Taster, Quality Control Team Raw Materials Import Dept., SCM Division UCC Ueshima Coffee Co., Ltd.
Fujii-san
UCC COFFEE

Exclusive Feature:
"New★Let' s Visit the Factory!"

Let' s Visit UCC Ueshima Coffee Co., Ltd.' s Factory!

At McDonald' s, we work hard every day with a variety of suppliers to serve delicious meals to our customers. This time, from among our many suppliers, we are turning the spotlight on UCC Ueshima Coffee Co., Ltd. ("UCC" hereinafter), the coffee supplier playing a key role in the 2026 renewal of our Premium Roast Coffee!

We try to uncover the secret behind the delicious taste of McDonald' s signature coffee.

Giving Our Crew People The Opportunity to Learn About Our Suppliers' Initiatives!

Have You Heard of "New★Let' s Visit the Factory!"?

McDonald' s runs a special program called "Let' s Visit the Factory!" in which restaurant staff get to visit our suppliers' factories. Since 2024, the program has been revamped as "New★Let' s Visit the Factory!" Seeing firsthand and learning about the manufacturing processes and each supplier' s commitment to quality helps us deepen our understanding of their efforts and use that knowledge to improve food quality at our restaurants.

What Kind of Company Is UCC?

We work with the entire coffee value chain — from cultivation and sourcing to research and development, manufacturing, sales, and cultural/educational activities. We have our own plantations in Jamaica and Hawaii and operate businesses around the world. We are proud to be the only company in Asia to rank among the Top 10 in the volume of green coffee beans handled. Our company uses the expertise it has cultivated around the world and its rigorous quality control to help people enjoy a delicious cup of coffee.

UCC BLACK
UCC MILK COFFEE
UCC GOLD SPECIAL

Uncovering the Secrets Behind Great-Tasting Coffee: Interviews

Great-Tasting Coffee Comes from an Uncompromising Attitude and Everyone' s Hard Work — Right?!

Coffee
ra.org/jp
McCafé

Q Please tell us about the history of UCC and McDonald' s!

For decades now, we' ve been working hand in hand to bring great-tasting coffee to our customers!

The Premium Roast Coffee, launched in 2008, will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2028. We' ve been partners not just for the past 20 years, but actually since before the 2000s. As of 2026, we manufacture Premium Roast Coffee, Premium Roast Iced Coffee, and Coffee for Lattes at our three factories — the Rokko Island, Fuji, and North Kanto factories — and ensure a steady supply to (McDonald' s) restaurants in our respective service areas.

2026 saw the renewal of the Premium Roast Coffee, but in fact, we' ve kept updating different coffee menu items for the past few years — more or less on an annual basis. As your long-standing partner, we are constantly striving to improve quality and flavor to be able to deliver the same great taste that people have come to expect.

Q What has changed with the Premium Roast Coffee as part of this latest renewal?

We' ve enhanced it to bring out the beans' natural, strong richness and a clean, crisp aftertaste.

For this renewal, we got started by finding out the value our customers seek in coffee. Consumer surveys have revealed their needs — e.g., to feel relaxed, take a break, or enjoy fragrances.

In addition, we proceeded to design the flavor profile with the preferences of our main target audience — men in their 40s and 50s — in mind. We tried to come up with the kind of coffee that brings out the sweetness while toning down the acidity. And after much trial and error, we finally perfected our latest Premium Roast Coffee, with a strong, rich flavor and a crisp aftertaste.

We also made a conscious effort to make sure this coffee was a good fit for McDonald' s!

At McDonald' s, it' s not uncommon to see customers spending time relaxing inside the restaurant — whether enjoying a conversation with a cup of coffee in hand or getting some work done. For this reason, we' ve taken steps to ensure that even if you don' t drink the coffee right after purchasing it, it won' t develop an unpleasant sour taste as time passes.

Also, since coffee is often ordered alongside such menu items as burgers and fries, we placed a strong emphasis on food pairing. In the course of product development, we actually paired coffee with menu items like the Big Mac® and made repeated fine adjustments while members from various teams — including Sales, Development, and Sourcing — kept checking the flavor balance.

Q What were some of the challenges you faced while working on this renewal?

Discerning the flavors within a limited timeframe turned out to be a challenge.

Coffee beans right after roasting tend to have an inconsistent flavor. Therefore, you need to keep tasting the beans as the gas is released. During this development process, we tasted the coffee repeatedly — immediately after roasting, a few days later, and then a week later — to ensure we didn' t lose sight of the flavor profile we were aiming for. How can we deliver the best-tasting coffee possible within a limited amount of time? It was certainly challenging, but I also felt it was an opportunity to show what we' re capable of.

Q Could you share with us the dedication that goes into UCC' s coffee?

Never compromise at any stage of the process involved. We' re all working together to make a great-tasting cup of coffee!

As a coffee supplier, what we value most is QUALITY. At UCC, we conduct rigorous quality checks starting from the contract signing stage for coffee beans. In our Quality Control Lab, commonly referred to as the "Guardians of Flavor," samples received from suppliers are inspected in three stages: as green beans, in the post-roasting state, and for flavor. We assess whether the quality and grade meet our required standards and then decide whether to purchase those beans.

At our manufacturing facilities, we have staff who hold the in-house "UCC Cup Taster" certification to conduct thorough quality checks. For example, when goods arrive at the factory, an incoming inspection is conducted on every single bag. We don' t just rely on machines; we also conduct sensory inspections that make use of the human senses. Also, there are repeated inspections during the manufacturing process and on the final products.

From sourcing and receiving the beans through manufacturing and final inspection, each person passes the quality baton to the next. It is through these multiple layers of checks that we are able to consistently deliver great-tasting products.

What Is a UCC Cup Taster?

It is an in-house certification awarded only to those who have completed specialized training and met the high standards set for the sensory training program that all factory employees are required to undergo. They are specialists in assessing the quality of coffee.

Q What are your goals for the future?

We want to help more customers enjoy a moment of comfort with coffee!

UCC' s goal is not simply to deliver great-tasting coffee. It is to bring that value to as many customers as possible. To this end, we will continue exploring new ways for everyone to enjoy coffee—not only for those who already love coffee, but also for infrequent coffee drinkers and younger generations.

In manufacturing, we also plan to focus on each individual process and explore new methods for bringing out even more of the coffee' s flavor.

By staying attuned to customers' changing needs over time, we will continue working with McDonald' s to create coffee that brings smiles to even more people.

Traveling to Restaurants Just to Taste the Coffee!?

At UCC, sales representatives regularly visit restaurants to check the quality of the coffee being served. In addition to tasting the coffee, they use specialized equipment to measure concentration and temperature and use their findings to improve the coffee and restaurant operations. UCC tracks coffee quality from production to the customer' s cup. This commitment helps ensure safe, great-tasting coffee.

Inamoto-san
Izu-san
Oki-san

Uncovering the Secrets Behind Great-Tasting Coffee: A Factory Tour

A Secret Behind Every Step!? Discover UCC’s Commitment to Great Coffee!

SMILE goes behind the scenes at the UCC Rokko Island Factory!
Following coffee’s journey to McDonald’s restaurants, we made many new discoveries.

Discover & Report! From Coffee Beans to the Restaurant

Pre-Purchase Inspection

Discovery!

Coffee quality checks begin before the beans even arrive at the factory!

The UCC Rokko Island Factory has a specialized department responsible for inspecting coffee beans at the contract stage for use across all UCC factories nationwide. The department rigorously evaluates green coffee beans and their roasted flavor and aroma, purchasing only those that meet its standards.

We source only Rainforest Alliance-certified beans!

Incoming Inspection

Discovery!

“UCC Cup Tasters” inspect every bag to ensure quality!

Specialist staff with the “UCC Cup Taster” qualification inspect harvested, processed, and delivered green coffee beans for their shape, color, size, taste, and aroma.

Roasting

Discovery!

Using proprietary systems and processes to achieve the best roast every day!

During roasting, the temperature of the beans is continuously monitored. By adjusting the hot-air temperature and flow accordingly, UCC consistently achieves the ideal roast. At the Rokko Island Factory, the beans are also rapidly cooled using the proprietary “Aroma Freezing Process,” which locks the aroma inside the coffee beans!

Blending

Discovery!

Combining several types of beans to create a one-of-a-kind flavor!

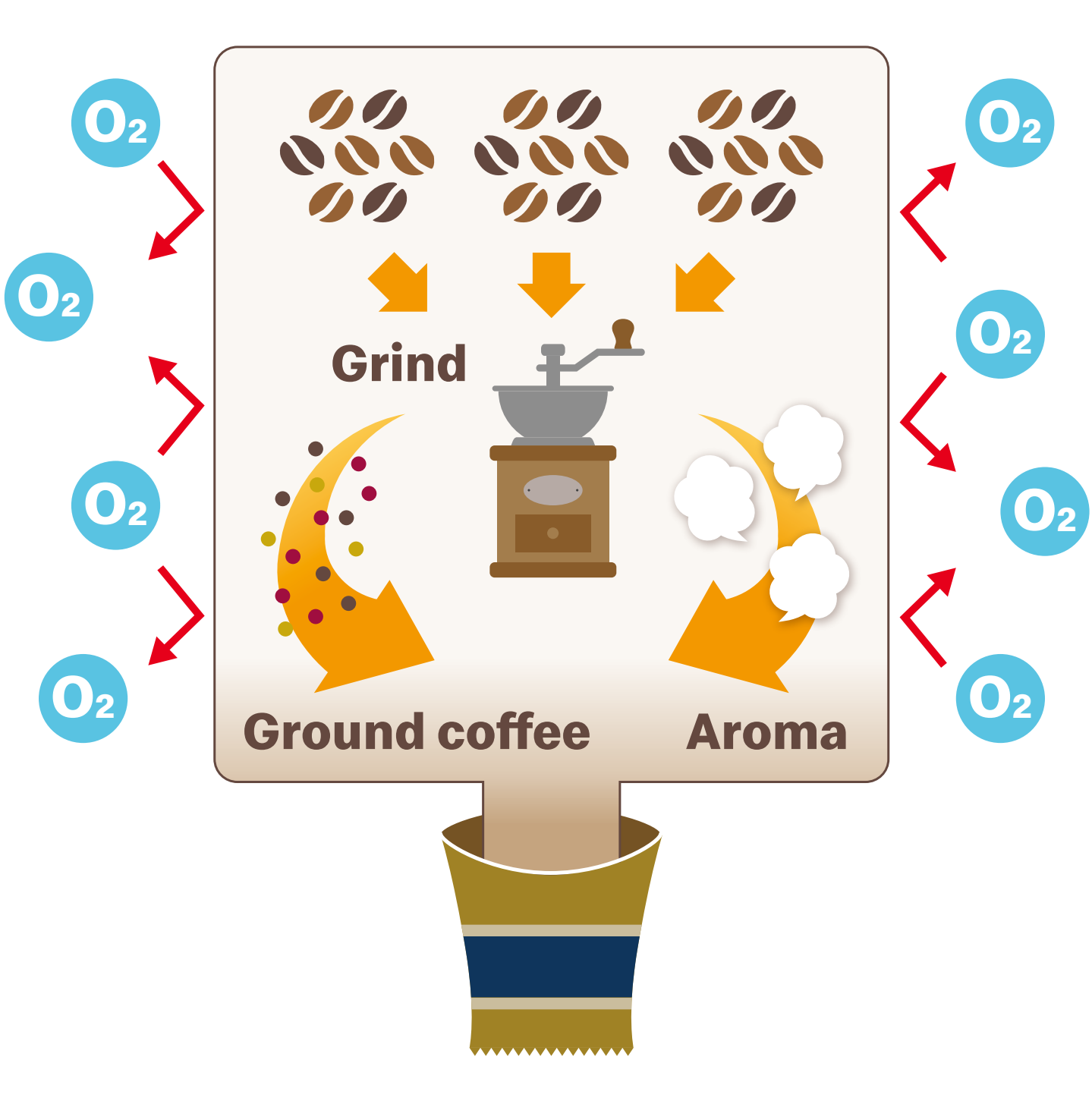
Several types of roasted coffee beans are blended in carefully selected proportions. The great taste of “Premium Roast Coffee” comes from carefully blending beans from several coffee-producing countries, with distinct blends for hot and iced coffee.

Grinding & Packaging

Discovery!

Keeping oxygen out to lock in the coffee’s rich aroma!

The roasted beans are ground to the optimal particle size for their intended use. From grinding to packaging—when aroma release peaks—UCC uses an airtight “Super Aroma Process.” By blocking oxygen that can degrade flavor, they seal rich, fresh-ground aroma directly into every bag.



Product Inspection

Discovery!

Combining the power of people and machines to deliver safe, reliable coffee!

Even in the final check before shipping, the coffee’s taste and aroma are tested, and specialized equipment is used to conduct additional measurements. Only products that pass multiple layers of quality checks are delivered to our restaurants, ensuring they are safe and reliable!

Here’s what the coffee packaging used to look like! Do you remember them?

McDonald's
マクドナルド

Ever Heard of “Single-Origin Roasting”?

UCC uses a specialized process called “Single-Origin Roasting,” roasting coffee beans separately according to their origin and variety. By tailoring the roast to highlight each bean’s unique character, this approach brings out their full, natural flavor.

Ever Heard of a “Fresh Valve”?

It’s a valve developed by UCC specifically for coffee. It lets carbon dioxide released by the coffee escape from the package while keeping outside air from getting in, helping preserve the coffee’s freshness. At McDonald’s, it is used in our iced coffee packaging.

Feedback from the crew always brings fresh insights. UCC is a company where we can take on any challenge when it comes to coffee. We would love to hear all your thoughts and opinions!

Because coffee is such a simple product, even the smallest difference can hugely impact the taste. Never compromise—make sure you follow operational rules to the letter every single time!

We are at the “starting point” of making coffee, while crew members play a vital role in maintaining quality at the point closest to our customers. Let’s continue working together to deliver a cup of coffee that keeps our customers satisfied!

Learn About the History and Culture of Coffee!

UCC Coffee Museum

The UCC Coffee Museum was established in Kobe, the birthplace of UCC, on October 1, 1987, with the aim of sharing the wonders of coffee with as many people as possible. On July 1, 2026, the museum reopened after a major renewal as a “coffee amusement park” where both adults and children can learn about and enjoy coffee. Be sure to pay it a visit!

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