

# CHRISTIE & CO

FROM DREAM TO MAINSTREAM

## PRESS RELEASE

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**FRINJ**  
COFFEE

### Meet Jay Ruskey: The Man Behind the California Craft Coffee Movement

*The world's finest coffees are coming out of Santa Barbara, California, refined by decades of experience in cultivating the perfect cup.*

**Santa Barbara, CA (AUGUST 2020)** — Farmer, Agronomist and the CEO of [FRINJ Coffee](#), Jay Ruskey is cultivating transformative coffee experiences across the globe, from his Good Land Organics farm just north of Santa Barbara, CA. Early on, Jay began realizing success with crops unique to the California Coast, such as caviar limes, truffle trees, and cherimoyas. Still, it was coffee that would eventually capture his heart, career and the attention of the most discerning coffee connoisseurs.

Today, Ruskey works with 64 farms across California, instructing farmers on how to grow world-renowned FRINJ coffee for stunning varietals that satisfy even the most discerning palate.



Ruskey has helped build the California Coffee movement since its infancy, working with leading researchers at U.C. Davis and multiple other ag research institutions to deepen its sophistication and scientific substantiation. Decades later, the FRINJ team is committed to teaching local farmers how to turn profits from this unlikely California crop, while turning droves of coffee enthusiasts into loyal patrons.

Even celebrities are cultivating the equatorial plant in Southern California. Grammy award-winning musician Jason Mraz is growing FRINJ Coffee from his [Mraz Family Farms](#) in Oceanside, CA. His Geisha varietal sells for a whopping \$450 per pound, and is available at La Jolla's Bird Rock Coffee Roasters.

Ruskey was introduced to the coffee crop through professor Dr. Mark Gaskell of UC Davis. It took Ruskey approximately 15 years of working with the coffee tree until it was somewhat viable in the California climate. Although Ruskey's farm sits 12 degrees north of the tropics, where coffee is traditionally grown, he saw opportunity in working in a state with world-renowned agricultural universities, thriving technology hubs, and the pioneering spirit of the California vintners. Despite the many naysayers who didn't believe that growing coffee was possible or profitable outside of the tropics, Ruskey pushed on. It wasn't until 2014 that Ruskey announced himself as a coffee producer.



In 2014, after years of working on plant selection and post-harvest for the California climate, he won 27<sup>th</sup> best coffee in the world from *Coffee Review*. This award coincided perfectly with the arrival of 'Third Wave Coffee.' Third-wave coffee consumers want to know who is growing their coffee, demand unwavering quality, subtle notes and are willing to pay a premium for these preferences.

Though Ruskey has worked with hundreds of plant varieties throughout his more than 30 years as an agricultural innovator, coffee is now his singular focus. Today he and his FRINJ team are almost completely dedicated to growing and harvesting the perfect coffee on the California Coast and helping other California farmers do the same. Throughout his journey, he had several moments when he realized that he was on to something: Not only could he grow great-tasting coffee in California, he could also redefine the industry. In March 2017, the elements aligned, and Ruskey realized he had a unique opportunity for California farmers, so he formed FRINJ Coffee and began to raise capital to build a new industry.

Investors (and even Ruskey's own partner farmers) have been eager to join and support the growth of this burgeoning industry. Ruskey raised \$4 million in a seed round with over half of the money invested by farmers directly. The momentum has endured with investors continuing to support FRINJ's growth, reflective of the rapidly-growing investor interest in sustainable agriculture and agtech.

Uniquely, 60% of the return from FRINJ Coffee goes back to farmers, which FRINJ Coffee does by purchasing and processing a farmer's cherry and bringing the product to market. Ruskey speaks of this modestly, but this business model is truly revolutionary. In a standard supply chain, farmers' return retail value is only 2-5% from their harvest. Ruskey has also worked tirelessly to create a connected and motivated culture amongst the FRINJ Coffee farmers.

Another way Ruskey is revolutionizing the coffee industry is by participating in and driving research around the coffee plant. Previously, there had been little research conducted on the coffee plant. As Ruskey was experimenting with coffee plant varieties in his early days, there wasn't a lot of high science on variety development. He began working with scientists at the University of California system, including his FRINJ Coffee Co-Founder and CFO, UC Davis geneticist Juan F. Medrano, Ph.D. Both Ruskey and Professor Medrano do extensive work within and outside the California university systems conducting research and breeding on plant development for developing new varieties. Ruskey and Professor Medrano have even participated in teaching classes on general coffee production courses that have become very popular on the Davis campus. Ruskey regularly collaborates with the UC Davis Coffee Center, the first multidisciplinary university research center, to address the challenges and needs of the coffee industry through a holistic approach to coffee science and education.

Ruskey's work is pleasing consumers just as much as it is farmers, investors, and researchers. Today's coffee aficionados seek an elevated experience, guided by both intellect and the senses. This kind of experiential coffee drinking is also drawing in new customers, such as wine connoisseurs and foodies who are passionate about imbibing in the most nuanced and highly-rated coffees in the world.

FRINJ offers a luxury coffee experience, rooted in continuing research by some of the world's top agricultural universities. Ruskey looks forward to the next steps in bringing his unique varieties to the consumer, including a tasting room experience in Southern California.

## FRINJ Coffee



FRINJ Coffee is a late-stage growth company, coffee breeder, and luxury coffee producer. In 2002, Farmer & Agronomist Jay Ruskey planted a trial crop of coffee at his family-owned and operated farm in the hills of Santa Barbara, California, called Good Land Organics. Ruskey proved that coffee could be grown successfully outside of tropical regions and put California coffee on the map! FRINJ has amassed 3500 coffee trees with one of the most diverse collection of coffees in the world. The farm takes the coffee experience full circle, from seed to harvest to roast to cup. FRINJ Coffee was incorporated in 2017, setting out to provide California farmers an opportunity to diversify their farm portfolios. Today, they support a growing number of farms in the coastal climates of Central and Southern California. Their science-forward services span from production to post-harvest to product marketing, ensuring excellence from the field to the cup.

For more information, visit [FRINJ Coffee online](#), For media inquiries, contact Christina Madrid at Christie & Co, [www.christieand.co](http://www.christieand.co), by phone (805) 576-7102 and/or email [christina@christieand.co](mailto:christina@christieand.co).

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