

Red Bank, N.J. store staff represented Ten Thousand Villages at the United Nations.

Ten Thousand Villages, Red Bank, N.J., Store Manager Amber Graves Jacobowitz and Assistant Store Manager Dalaiah Kusner represented Ten Thousand Villages at an Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony and Fair Trade Coffee Tasting held at the United Nations on Monday, October 24. The event, hosted by the Ethiopian Ambassador to the United States, was held in honor of fair trade month and United Nations Day in an effort to raise awareness of coffee cooperatives in Ethiopia.

Coffee is the center of Ethiopian culture; without the export of coffee they have no economy. The Ethiopian coffee ceremony is the main social event within the village and a time to discuss the community, politics, life and gossip. The coffee ceremony takes place three times a day: in the morning, at noon and in the evening.

When invited to a coffee ceremony you cannot leave until the third round of coffee has been served. The third round is considered to bestow a blessing. Transformation of the spirit is said to take place during the coffee ceremony through the completion of “Abol” (the first round), “Tona” (second round) and “Baraka” (third round). A young woman, dressed in a traditional Ethiopian white dress with colored woven borders usually conducts the ceremony. She roasts the coffee beans in a flat pan over a tiny charcoal stove, the pungent smell mingling with the heady scent of incense that is always burned during the ceremony.

The woman conducting the ceremony gently washes a handful of coffee beans in the heated pan, then stirs and shakes the husks away. When the coffee beans have turned black and shining and the aromatic oil is coaxed out of them, she grinds them with a pestle and mortar. She slowly stirs the ground coffee into the black clay coffee pot locally known as “jebena” (round at the bottom with a straw lid). The woman strains the coffee through a fine sieve several times. She finally serves the coffee in tiny china cups, pouring a thin golden stream of coffee into each little cup from a height of one foot without an interruption.