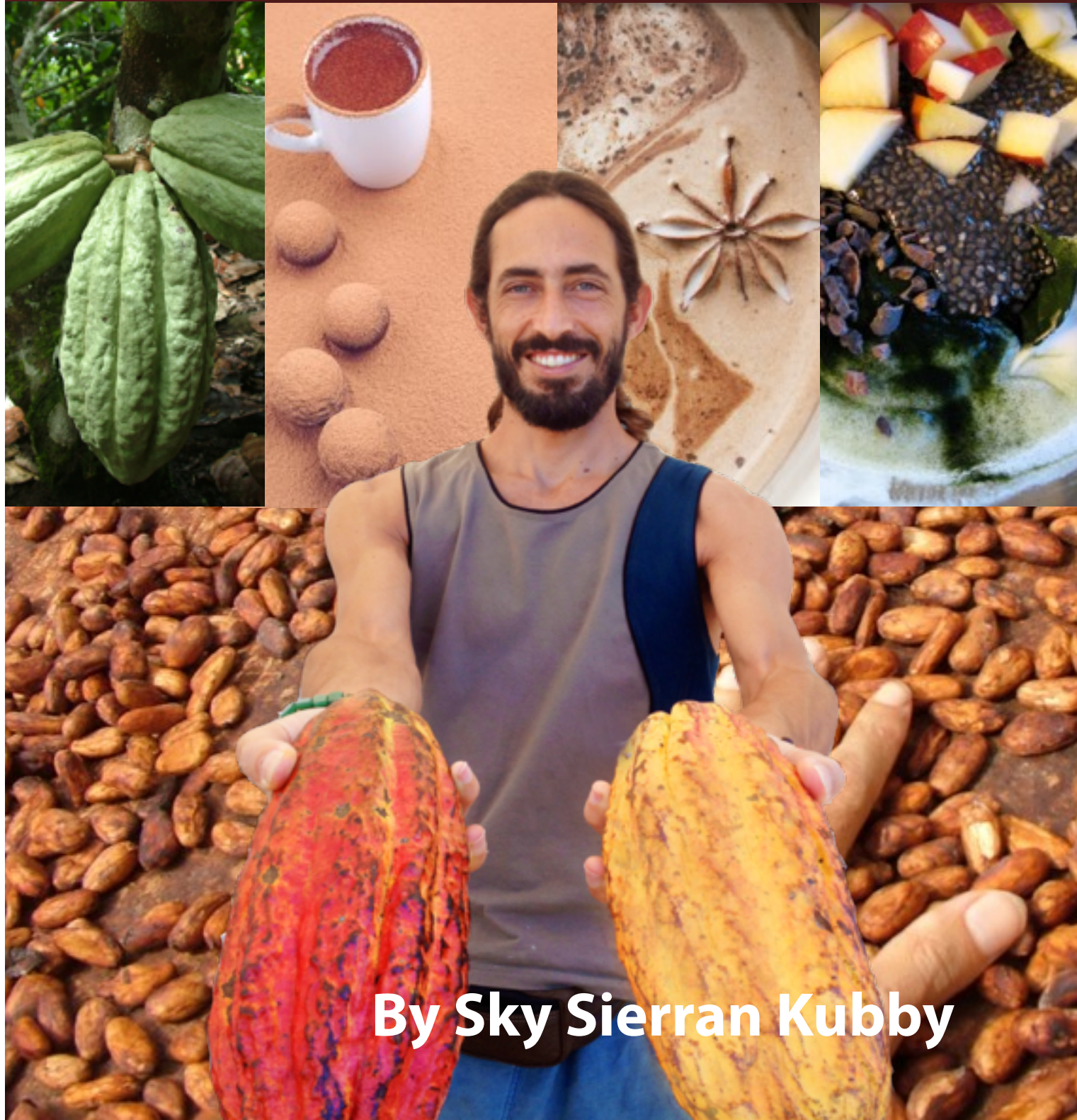


# The Raw Chocolate Diet

Cleanse, Tonify and Live the Raw Chocolate Lifestyle



By Sky Sierran Kubby



# Introduction

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What if you could eat chocolate for the rest of your life, and keep get healthier along the way? Well, congratulations! Together well make that a reality. Not only will you be finding yourself eating more raw chocolate but you'll soon discover that you've taken a quantum leap towards a healthier lifestyle. I wrote this guide to uplift and support you to bring more Health, Balance and ... Chocolate, into your life!

I Love Chocolate, and, to let you a little secret, *Chocolate* Loves me! We have this relationship, you see, one of Respect, Love and Healing. Yes, chocolate has a Spirit, and we *are* intimate. Together, we'll journey back in time to see how the Mayas and Aztecs revered this plant. As we explore the ancient Myth and Legends we will meet the Spirit of Cacao. You just might discover that you have a deeper connection with Her than you realize!

Much of what is contained here is the culmination of what I learned on my healing journey as I overcame Chronic Asthma, Lung Infections and Candida. I was a ski racer and felt like I was constantly sick and in hospitals. It took me embracing many Ancient healing modalities as well as some "Fringe" Therapies, to come back into Balance and be experiencing. Radiant Health today.

From that experience I created Medicinal-Foods, a line of signature Superfood blends and cutting-edge Health products that are

effective in assisting people in transitioning to a more Organic Whole Live Raw Foods Diet. Medicinal-Foods is focused on the latter part of Hippocrates quote,

"Let food be thy medicine and let thy *Medicine be thy food.*"

There is no doubt that Raw Chocolate is Medicine and has been used as a carrier of medicine for 1,000's of years. If treated with respect and dosed appropriately Raw chocolate can be a *medicine*-eaten as a food!

We'll look at what functional Chocolate is and explore some Medicinal-Foods products. Then we'll explore food combining and how one can transition into a cleanse and celebrate after, with chocolate!

Lastly, I've assembled a Meal Plan with some of the tastiest Whole and Raw Food meals and Desserts to assist those on a transition diet. We adhere to no dogmatic principals and all diets are considered as long as they are healing and nourishing. With this Knowledge comes a Freedom: To have your chocolate **and eat it too!**

In Radiant Health,

-Sky Sierran Kubby, Founder and CEO, Medicinal-Foods LLC



# Dedication

*This book is dedicated to the Cacao Spirit and her many Lovers.*

*May this work help to grow the Love.*

# Acknowledgments

The following have, in their own ways, helped me deepen my connection with the **Spirit of Cacao**. We all share love for this sacred plant. It's through this Love the people listed below all unified. Sending Deep Gratitude to:

My **Daughter Star**, always a willing assistant and tester in the chocolate lab, and **Wife, Omra**, for encouraging me as a chocolatier and loving me, and my chocolate, so much! **Manice Martin**, who gave me my first Heirloom Cacao Bean, 13 years ago, stating, "This is the One!" I planted it and to this day the tree produces the biggest fattest, sweetest, non-hybridized Cacao pods, rivaled only by the very best cultivars I've seen in Ecuador. **David Wolf**, whose unforgettable presence inspired me on those late nights of Cacao-Noni smoothies, long ago, in the Jungles of Hawaii. Whom, years later, I had the fortune to lead Cacao Ceremonies with, a modern day Cacao Shaman and Ambassador of Cacao. Through his grasp of Cacao alchemy, connection with its Spirit and sheer passion, he has catapulted Raw Chocolate into the modern lime light. Continually researching and educating, he is a driving force behind today's mainstream Raw Chocolate awareness. **Brent Willet**, of Cacao Logos, an amazing chocolatier, and friend, who produces Medicinal-Foods Raw Chocolate in the California Bay Area- *The Chocolate Capital of the World*. **Jordan** of Fearless Chocolate for your consulting, passion for chocolate machines and opening me up to the world of Chocolate Panning. **Dr. Roberto Cassar**, who helped me perfect a secret ingredient in my Mood Enhancing Chocolate. **Justin Wagner**, for your encouragement, support and deep Love for my chocolate. **Robert Williams**, for your dedication to keeping Cacao and Superfoods flowing to the northern hemisphere. **Jennifer Baugham, Casey Burge and Lia Lavender Gist**, you guys were there in the beginning and part of the inspiration for me become a chocolatier! And **Truth**, the kindred brother, fellow experimenter on thy self, with a similar healing journey as my own, thanks for all the inspiration to help launch my Elixir Bar. **Brian Miller**, for all my first Superfood ingredients to experiment with. **Steve Lund and Terra Anne**, of Hawaiian (Chocolate) Sanctuary, for all the venues to share my creations with the community! To YOU, all the customers and helpers along the way...

...*for the Love of Chocolate!*

-Sky Sierran Kubby January 27, 2014



Chapter 1

# Meet the Cacao Spirit

You may be surprised by how  
intimately you already know her...





## Respect the Chocolate

***If you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles... if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle.***

**- Sun Tzu, The Art Of War (6th Century B.C)**

The purpose of the *Raw Chocolate Diet* is to make friends with this plant medicine and work with her as an ally. If abused, through lack of awareness like overconsumption, poor food combining or simply by eating other than good chocolate. If disrespected as she has been in the past, by combining her cacao with ultra-processed sugar, antibiotic-rich milk and artificial ingredients, she can become your enemy, and your body will suffer. These adulteries of cacao are the dark seeds planted long ago that have grown into the modern-day urban myths of chocolate being *bad* for your health.

It's quite the opposite: raw chocolate can be *incredible for your health*. We now know Cacao is good for many ailments and has been used as both a medicine and carrier of medicine for 1000's of years. It's no wonder chocolate is giving big Pharma a run for their money on the \$26 Billion Statin Drug industry. Theobromine, the mildly psychoactive stimulant in cacao that has only 1/20 the amount of caffeine as a cup of coffee is able to lower the bad LDL cholesterol and raise the good HDL. It's actually pretty incredible that this ancient *Food of the Gods*, raw chocolate, contains the *highest* amounts of Antioxidants and Magnesium of *any food*.

*"The Spirit of Cacao"*



Sky Kubby next to a 7 year old Heirloom Cacao Tree he planted at Hua Lani (Fruitful Heaven) Sanctuary. Big Island, Hawaii.



Today, chocolate is being used to help ADD, ADHD, Alzheimer's, Anemia, Anxiety, Arthritis, Asthma, Hypoglycemia, Cancer, Cataracts, Cavities, Chronic Fatigue, Constipation, Coughs, Cramps, Depression, Digestion, Diabetes, Emphysema, Fibromyalgia, Food Cravings, Headache, Heartbreak, Heart Disease, Hypertension, High Cholesterol, Immunity, Impotence, Infertility, Insomnia, Longevity, Macular Degeneration, Memory Loss, Menopause, Mental Performance, Mood Swings (if used in moderation), Osteoporosis, Stress, Stroke, Vitamin Deficiency and Weight Gain.

Over at <http://www.greenmedinfo.com/substance/chocolate> you can read over 40 serious medical studies that prove cacao has been documented to help with many diseases.

## A Personal Relationship with Cacao



For me, I took a vow to Cacao on Easter Day, when I was 7 years old...

A few years earlier, in the early 70s, my parents were directors of summer camp for Teens in Northern California called Earth Camp One. They pioneered healthy lifestyle of Yoga, Organic Gardening, Astronomy, Arts and Crafts, Backpacking and Mountaineer-

ing. They also prepared crazy new foods at the time, like Tofu and Granola. Earth Camp was an idyllic setting with a giant Spring that gushed out and fed a creek, pond and waterfall. I was delivered at home as campers held hands around the A-Frame, singing "Happy Birthday"... truly a time of great Awakening on the Planet.

When I was a few years old, My Dad, Steve Kubby, was forced to sell the camp due to his rare form of Adrenal Cancer. As he underwent major surgeries and then, later, experimental treatment in the Bahamas, I lived nearby the old summer camp with my Mother, Rebecca Maidman.

We had a piece of land in the temperate rainforest of the most southern Cascade mountain range. with a big creek and garden. She had pulled a school bus, painted light blue onto that land 33 years ago. We lived in that bus, and the small house built off to the side. My Mom canned food from her garden for the winter and I hauled drinking water up from the creek.

My most indulgent snack was dried pineapple ... and although it was exciting and I loved it when I could open up that Mason jar and pry out one of those sugary dried rings, I grew tired of it.

So you can see my over-the-top excitement I had on that Easter day when I was to receive the Ultimate Treat: *A Chocolate Bunny*.

It was Easter morning and we were on our way to the hot springs. We were walking through a meadow and I had my chocolate bunny in my hands. I had convince my mom it was time for me to bite the ears off the bunny. I had eaten chocolate

before and I knew that magical taste. With those memories swirling through my mind, I stopped on the trail and took a bite.

“What!”, I exclaimed. “This isn’t Chocolate...” I gasped, “It’s Carob!” I’d been had and I knew it! Totally bummed, I half heartedly nibbled on my carob bunny and silently vowed for the day to come when I’d get the Real Thing: Chocolate!

Every Easter since then I made sure to get my hands on a chocolate bunny. Then I learned that chocolate bunnies laid eggs: The Cadbury Cream Egg. And even though they were fairly disgusting and I could only manage to eat one, maybe two. I was all about it!

So you can see, when I became a Superfood Chocolatier, I vowed myself from my childhood trauma and made my own Chocolate Super Bunny:

## The Tao of Cacao

As great the physical benefits of raw chocolate, they are dwarfed, in my opinion, by those of the Spiritual. So it’s only fitting as we embark on this Journey that we take a moment to get acquainted on a *Spiritual* level with the plant from which chocolate *grows on*. The Cacao Spirit is a soft and Benevolent being. Yes, there is a Cacao God, and even the *Lady of Cacao* who, in legends, sprang out of the Earth and offered herself as the Cacao Tree. However we are concerning ourselves with the plant Deva, the Spirit of this miraculous medicine plant. She is a healing en-

### Chocolate Bunnies



Shots From Medicinal-Foods Chocolate Lab



ergy, approachable and willing to meet you at whatever level you are at. To become aligned with Her as an ally we must learn to work with each other in harmony and balance, to honor Her with awareness and respect.

As a chocolatier, I have an intimate relationship with the *Spirit of Cacao*. In making and successfully tempering chocolate, about 10 things can go wrong. So as to avoid problems one must *listen* and learn... to *sense* the Chocolate. Trial and error works but many chocolatiers have confirmed success depends on the level one can attune to the gentle guidance from Cacao Spirit.

You, however, may be surprised to discover how deep your own connection runs with this benevolent plant Spirit. If I do my job, by the end of this chapter, you will reconnect or strengthen your existing *personal* relationship with Her.

My wife, **Omra**, and I hold space for Cacao Ceremonies, a Heart-Opening experience that transitions into Shamanic Dance. We offer a platform where people can show up and commune with the Cacao Spirit at whatever level they are at. Once in a state of blindfolded Shamanic Dance, their Souls are free to travel to into a space where old patterns and stuck energy can be cleared. In sharing stories during the ceremony it's amazing witness people open up and reconnect with the Cacao Spirit, realizing they have had a deep connection for a long time. At one ceremony in Hawaii, our friend, Kahea, with tears in her eyes, recounted an old memory,

***“Every day my Father would come back from work with a chocolate bar. I can remember always looking forward to it and how much Warmth and Love I feel in my heart when I think about that moment.”***

***-Kahea, Big Island, Hawaii***

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## Invoking the Spirit of Cacao

Now let us take a moment to Invoke the Cacao Spirit and offer Her our Intentions:

***“We invoke YOU, Great Cacao Spirit! We humbly ask you to be our Ally, and walk with us, in Harmony and Balance. Spirit of Cacao, enter our Hearts and help us to expand our capacity to Love and connect with each other. May we learn of your mysteries as we receive your Medicine with Gratitude and Respect for many years to come. Aho!”***

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Now that the Cacao Spirit is with us, let us travel, briefly, into the past history of this revered sacramental plant to gain perspective on the present. Let the journey begin:



## History of Cacao |ka'cow|

In writing *The Raw Chocolate Diet*, I wasn't sure how far down the chocolate rabbit hole I wanted to go. The more you dig the more obscure and bizarre the information gets.

We begin with the Lady of Cacao coming out of the ground, offering her body as the cacao tree. This anthropomorphizing of the indigenous people sacred plants is a common theme. For example, in the Hawaiian Mythology, the Kalo, or Taro was given to the people by a female goddess and considered a *member of the family*. Also, the Ulu, or *Breadfruit Tree* in Polynesian lore was a female energy that offered herself as sustenance for the people.

Cacao is considered to be Food of the Gods, but also where humans came from. The creator gods tried using stick and mud, but when that fail they went for the Cacao, and Bam, we had humans. As wild as it sounds, for many native people this is how it went down.

### Language

Even the history of the words and language that led to what we call chocolate is convoluted, however offer a direct link to this amazing chocolate substance we still eat and drink today.

Woman pouring Cacao Elixir



Traditionally poured from gourd to gourd.



*Cacao* is a Spanish word originating from Maya glyphs that translates to the word *Ka Ka wa*,, *Kakaw*, or *Kakau*.



The Maya passed on another of their words to the Aztecs, *Chocol'haa*, must be the early beginning of what is now known as *Chocolate*, a word quite butchered by the Spanish from its original roots.

The most reasonable theory is that the Aztecs called their beloved chocolate drink "Cacahuatl" and the Spanish must of thought it was gross, this brown drink that had the word "caca" in it, sounding like what meant *poop* in their language, So it probably was easy for them to mix-up the Maya Yucatec words *Chocol* meaning "Hot" and *Haa* meaning "Water" to get "Chocol-haa" "Hot Water".

Another version is where Miguel Leon-Portilla. expert in the Nahuatl language believes chocolate came from: A mix of the Yucatec word for "Hot" *Chocol* and Aztec Nahuatl (or Nawa) word

*Atle* meaning "Water" to get a hybrid Yucatec-Nahuatl version of *Chocol-Atle*, again, "Hot Water". It's a little confusing, but wait, theres more:

The Nahuatl word for bitter, "Xoco" and water "Atle" makes "Xoco-atl" or "Bitter Water"...which the drink was often referred to traditionally, being less sweet than we expect today.

Lastly, the conquistadors could have been mixing in a little Quiché Maya verbiage *Chokola'j* meaning, "To drink chocolate together". I like this last version the best as it seems appropriate for the Cacao Ceremonies I facilitate with my wife, Omra.

## Myth and Legend

There is a reason why Swiss Botanist Carolus Linnaeus named the Chocolate Tree *Theobroma Cacao*, meaning "Food of the Gods Cacao". Besides being a chocolate lover himself, he may have heard of the God-King Hunahpu who, as Maya legend states, initiated the early cultivation of Cacao.

Chocolate seems to appear in the world when there is great strife, war or any other dis-ease of the heart. We see a great blossoming of cacao when there is great need of love and healing of the heart in the world. From the Dark Ages to today we see a great resurrection of the spirit of Cacao and the eating and drinking of chocolate.



Montezuma believed Cacao to be ambrosia for the Gods. It was said that he would drink 50 cups of his Cacao Elixir, never with maize as that was for the commoners, before visiting his Harem.

## Origins

Some scientists pinpoint the origins of Cacao to the foothills of the Columbian and Venezuelan Andes, while others place it closer to the Peruvian Andes. However most agree the most ancient Cacao Connoisseurs were the Olmecs, the Pre-Maya Mesoamerican Ancestors.

Theobromine has been found at Olmec sites, on pottery shards, dating as far back as around 1650-1500 BC. The lesser known Jaguar Cacao, or *Paxtaxte* is said to be the masculine Brother of Cacao and contains higher amounts of Theobromine, a much milder stimulant than coffee, now recognized to help raise HDL *good cholesterol* levels.

***"...and so they were happy over the provisions of the good mountain, filled with sweet things, ...thick with paxtaxte and cacao...the rich foods filling up the citadel named Broken Place, Bitter Water Place".***

Theobromine is a mildly psychoactive substance with the power to both stimulate and relax. It can stimulate like coffee, but



Ancient Mayan Cacao Elixir Mug



Dating back to 1650-1500 B.C. Pottery like this has been found with Theobromine residue inside.



about 10 times weaker and does not effect the central nervous system. It has the power to dilate blood vessels and relax bronchial muscles - thus effective in cough medicines.

## Inca, Maya and Aztec

These three powerhouse cultures all honored Cacao a form of divine communication the blessed *Food of the Gods*. This becomes clear in pre-Columbian art when we see part God, part Human, part Cacao beings. In Jack Weatherford's, *History of Chocolate*, he postulates in the area of what is now Venezuela, believed was the birthplace of Cacao, that the people there *Created* Cacao. He suggests they cultivated it, just as the Inca created the potato through their advance genetics technologies.

The Mayas shared their sacred *Kakaw* with the Aztecs. Ancient chocolate was more of a beverage, first ground, warmed and mixed into a paste, then more water added as it was poured from gourd to gourd to foam up. Drunk in gourds from the Calabash tree and made into a type of gruel- some thicker than others. In Mexico cacao was mixed with corn. In Ecuador, barley flour, to



make a thick gruel. Chili peppers, flowers, cornmeal, vanilla beans, and black pepper were added to the cakes and drinks.

Perhaps the most prized was the frothy drink traditionally mashed with a grooved mixer called a *Molinillo* and then poured from one gourd to another. The Aztecs, like the Mayas would remove the top *Froth* before adding other ingredients, however it appears the Aztecs preferred their drink cool. In Oaxaca, the frothy top is still considered to represent a gift of personal energy, of vigor, shared from one person to another. Perhaps the symbol of strength portrayed in the foam was representation of the amount of work it took to get the brew to foam with those old school Molinillos. Today we have the Vitamix and Nutribullet.

In "The Natural and Cultural history of Chocolate," Maricel Presilla write about the *Humors* of chocolate and how every food brought to Spain was looked at for its medical use. Adopted from Greek and Roman medicine, the humors of the body related to the elements of earth air wind and fire, expressed by cold, dry, warm and moist properties. Cacao being so complex was thought to have both warm and dry, as well as cold an moist properties.

Cardenas, a health guru of the time travelled to Mexico and described cacao as, "...mingling contradictory qualities in complex fashion. He didn't like raw (fresh) cacao and stated that the spices that traditional people used were thought to balance the potentially dangerous cold and earthy aspects of cacao. Honey was considered too hot, and sugar being more neutral. Cardenas



also had problems with the revered foam on top saying that it was, “...nothing but air, creating “wind” in the stomach. Besides that, Cardenas deemed cacao as an overall healthy food to consume.

Highland Mexican tribes revered cacao as such a powerful sacrament that they travelled long distances to procure baskets of Cacao Pods. Surely the Spirit of Cacao is with them as they continue this practice today, although they have Peyote and other powerful medicines right there at their feet.

Cacao was so revered that it functioned as *money* and was used to pay taxes. Before the Spanish conquest was truly a time when "money grew on trees,". Even today the beans are so important to the Ecuadorian Economy they are call *Pepe de oro*, or Seeds of Gold.

One reference stated that one bean would buy one avocado. Here's a list of what items cost in Cacao Beans in the city of Tlaxcala, 1545 AD:

- *A turkey cock: 200 cocoa beans*
- *A turkey hen: 100 cocoa beans*
- *The daily wage of a porter: 100 cocoa beans*
- *A forest rabbit: 100 cocoa beans*
- *A small rabbit: 30 cocoa beans*
- *A turkey egg: 3 cocoa beans*
- *An avocado: 3 cocoa beans*

## Food of the Gods





- *A fish in maize husks: 3 cocoa beans*
- *A large tomato: 1 cocoa bean*
- *A large sapoté fruit: 1 cocoa bean*

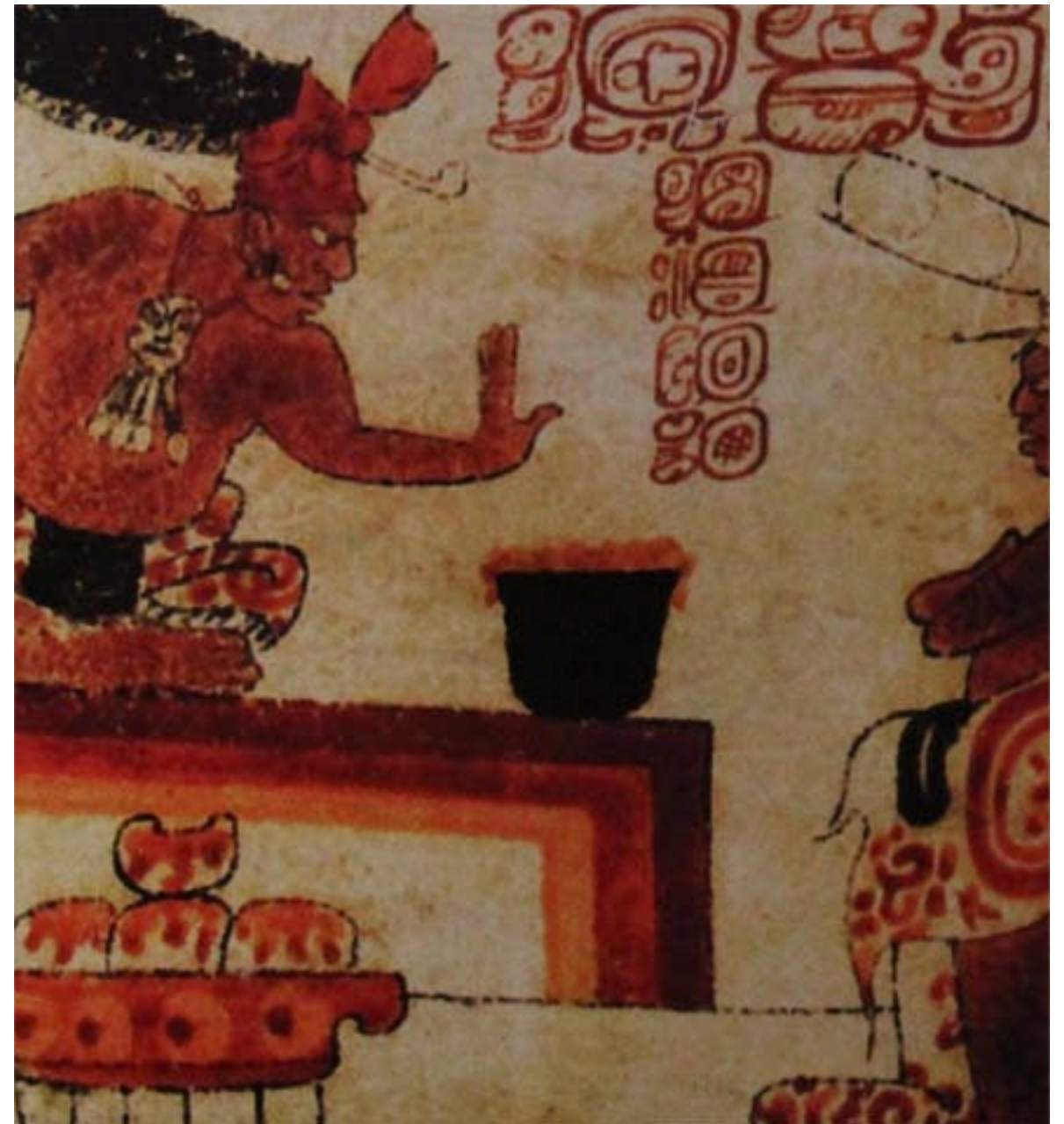
Among the Mayas, chocolate was an elite, prestigious drink, reserved for royalty, nobility, long-distance merchants, and high-ranking warriors. By 450 BC large numbers of magnificent vases filled with the chocolate drink were placed in the tombs of Maya kings. Beyond its function as a funerary offering, chocolate continues to be part of important celebrations, including the negotiation and celebration of marriages.

The image to the right depicts a palace scene painted on a Maya vase (Late Classic). In the glyphs it states that the guy on the left (King or Lord) is expressing his displeasure at the temperature of his Hot Cacao Elixir. Below him are tamales, served on special occasions, drizzled in chocolate - chili sauce.

A Mixtec painting of a marriage ceremony depicts Lord Eight Deer and Lady Thirteen Serpent are celebrating with a chalice of extra frothy Cacao Elixir. For the Aztecs Cacao was exclusively for the



“This Cacao Elixir is not warm enough”



A Maya Lord expressing displeasure in the temperature of his frothy Cacao Elixir. Note the Tamales with Molé, chocolate-chile and herb sauce, below.





The beans on the left are 6-7 days fermented old and those on the left are 2-3 days.

Conflicting history of chocolate abounds and as we just saw a marriage ceremony painting, others write that it was forbidden for women to drink of the sacred chocolate. Surprisingly, women and commoners went to great lengths to procure chocolate, despite its vigorous growth. I can only speculate that there was a lockdown on Cacao cultivation.

This theme of being *Food of the Gods*, reserved for royalty stuck. In Mesoamerican, as well as England, Chocolate was held in such high regard that it was the drink of royalty and higher society.

The gourd as a drinking vessel used by the first Spaniards, was transformed into fine porcelain, or silver. Another version used by the Venezuelan upper class was coconut, like the Mexicans, but with a fine silver base and handles on each side. These heirlooms, along with any utensils having to do with chocolate were passed on to family members and highly prized.

Cortez may have been the one to first bring cacao back to Spain in his ship, along with his other treasures including animals like an armadillo and jaguar. Through the 1500's the Spanish court received the prestigious cacao Elixir. An interesting story



is that the friars of 1544 introduced the Kekchi Mayan nobles to Prince Phillip in Spain.

Fortunes were made and lost as cacao production dropped in central america due to epidemics like smallpox. New Colonies sprang up in South America and quality was most important. In *A Natural and Cultural History of Cacao*, Presilla writes about Venezuelan and columbian peasants have, still to this day, a tradition of 3 o'clock *merienda* eating queso de mano, fresh cheese, saliter in Columbia, dunked in hot chocolate and then removed. with a spoon. All classes in Columbia included chocolate with the meal. Black slaves drank it daily, thickened with corn. Gossel, as Swedish explorer drank chocolate in the morning and a few hours later ate a large meal including chocolate and cheese.

There was an odd Venezuelan custom of drinking ice water after a meal containing chocolate that still continues to this day. Although it may seem refreshing, drinking water with a meal not recommended based on its ability to dampen the digestive fire. A little water is fine.

This is other than the best ever because of the cold hampering digestion. Since Cacao melts at body temperature it is advised if drinking *anything* during a meal to drink room-temperature or warm water.

## Industrialized Cacao

As the vessel by which cacao was drunk transformed so was the processing of cacao. The stone slab Metate was the grinding tool of choice all the way into the 18th century. In 1828 , Dutchman-

Cacao with skin on bean



As the cacao is drying, attention is given to turning beans every so often to dry properly.





These are 4 day fermented beans from the Mendez region of the Amazon. Product of a governmental selective breeding program to find the best Cultivars. The beans of the 3 best are grown out into a seedling, then grafted onto a strong root stock.

Conrad Van Houten created a way to mechanically defat the cacao. This *butter* represented a crucial step in *eating chocolate*. Van Houten also created a way to take away the acidness of the bean caused by over fermentation, poor quality beans, This denaturing *alkali* treatment has become known as the *Dutch Process*, or *Dutch Cacao*. Although the chocolate becomes darker, smoother and more palatable, as we'll find out later, it does destroy many of the medicinal aspects such as antioxidant and enzyme levels.

At the turn of the century the *metate* grinder was made further obsolete by next innovation, the *Mélangeur*.

***“This mixing machine consists of a round granite revolving slab, forming a pan, the sides being of steel. Into this receptacle the cacao and sugar are poured, and two sets of heavy, stationary granite rollers bruise the thick mass, which is reduced to the consistency of dough, A double knife, the action of which is similar to the screw propeller, continually revolves above the rotary stone slab and distributes the Choco-***



*late as it passes.* -Richard  
*Cadbury, 1896 (The New Taste of Chocolate)*

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This stone on stone method produces finer than tastebud sized particles, many of which are still in use today.

## How Chocolate Is Made.

Cacao is best grown in the shade of tropical and sub-tropical regions. Although some cacao is now being grown in Japan with *biochar* and not losing its leaves in the winter. Most Cacao will take about 5 years to mature. I visited some plantations in Ecuador that planted grafted varieties of cacao that were extremely abundant yielders, producing with 2 years. These are non-hybridized, heirloom cacao that have been grown out and grafted onto healthy rootstock (see photo: opposite page).



Between 50,000-100,000 cacao blossoms will form on a tree within a year and averages about one fruit set per 500 flowers. Each fruit will have up to 50 beans. It will take about 500 beans to make a pound of chocolate. So that's about 10 pods per pound! The trees fruit most of the year with concentrated harvest sessions mid-year and the end of the season. Here we see a *Fino de Aroma* Cacao in Ecuador, known for its *fine flavor* grown

from shade-grown cacao, interplanted with Yucca, Tarot and Banana.

This fruit ripens yellow-orange rather than the bright red of the *Criollo* type, which boasts a stronger flavor. Forastero is the most widely cultivated with smoother rounder pods, yellow-green when ripe, and *Trinitario* is a Hybrid.

While on assignment in Ecuador, I visited a Cacao collective that was (un-)funded by the Ecuadorian government. As we toured the different aspects of the cacao initiative I could see the care and passion these people had for preserving the traditional ways of the people. From interplanting of Papachina (taro) and Yucca (tapioca) to sticking with sun-drying techniques





in greenhouses great care was given to produce a high quality beans.

Pods are harvested continuously through the season. Pods are cracked open cracked with a machete and traditionally left in piles atop and covered with banana leaves to ferment for up to 12 days

Fermentation brings out flavor profiles. Me-

dicinal Foods chocolate is fermented for no more than 4 days as that seems to be enough time to bring out and mellow out the bitter cacao bean. Longer than that and the chocolate can have a fermented taste to it.

Sun dried is the way to go with cacao beans. Here is a drying facility in Ecuador where the beans are sun dried and hand agitated throughout the day. However, some Cacao farmers *Gas Dry* with propane tanks. This is efficient, but looked down upon by exporters and buyers of high quality beans.

A common scene in Cacao countries is farmers cacao beans drying on the side of the road. Sun dried is the best. Usually beans are roasted at this point. However Raw chocolate can skip this

step, something that the people who ran the cacao facility were happy to oblige us on. Next the beans are placed in a winnower to be ground into nibs and the outer shell removed.

Cacao Paste is then made, often on-site, to ensure a stable product for shipping. Stone grinding is the best as it breaks down the particles to smaller than taste bud size. If done correctly so as to preserve quality and prevent mold, the beans and or cacao paste, is shipped in refrigerated containers. At chocolate factories beans are tested for several factors such as mold and flavor profile and, in the very near future, hopefully more standardized testing of other health markers such as Antioxidants levels

