

Sacred Cacao Ceremony FAQ Handout

- **Why have cacao ceremonies come to the US? Why now? What is the purpose?**

Cacao has returned to us at this time because humans have become out of balance with Nature. We are moving into a time of great planetary change, what the Native Americans prophecies called the Fifth World, or the Fifth Hoop. The Mayans called it the Fifth Sun or Nahui-Ollin. During the transition there are many changes and much chaos. But it is also a time of limitless possibilities, and opportunities for clearing, cleansing and healing. Cacao has returned to gently guide us, open our hearts, and help us return to balance with the earth. As chocolate connects us to our heart, it also connects us with something bigger - God/Goddess, the Universe, Spirit, and our higher self.
- **What is cacao? How is it different than chocolate?**

Ceremonial Cacao is grown in the rainforests of Guatemala and usually harvested by local indigenous people. Cacao used for ceremonies, rather than to be sold to chocolate manufacturers, is gathered from cacao trees in their natural habitat and not intended for large company use. Cacao beans are separated from the cacao pods and the white part of the fruit is removed. The husks are usually hand-removed from the bean by first gently heating the beans. Then the beans are ground in a mill sometimes a stone mill. The action of grinding causes the cacao bean to begin forming a thick paste. The paste hardens into blocks called cacao liquor. Cacao liquor contains the cacao butter and the bean, giving it a rich flavor. You may find that your drink will show signs of oil from the cacao butter.
- **Why do you call it sacred? What does sacred mean?**

We call it sacred as the experience we are offering is outside the boundaries of ordinary life. We are not consuming chocolate that has been processed as a consumer product for the masses. Eating chocolate without understanding of the plant spirit and elements of earth, water, and fire energy from which the cacao was grown may be what has led to the overindulgence of chocolate. We are instinctively drawn to chocolate as our hearts long for the awakening that cacao can bring. We are reverently partaking of cacao that has been gathered and prepared with special blessings and with the intention that those drinking the elixir will be blessed with a heart opening experience. Sacred means blessed, sanctified, to consecrate and dedicate our actions to a higher source or higher level of unfolding, to regard with reverence, deep contemplation and deep respect. This is what we bring to our ceremony.
- **What makes it a ceremony?**

A ceremony is a special occasion. We have created an event within which to create a deep and profound experience of consuming cacao. We are using ancient cross-cultural rituals or sequences of methods known to create 'sacred space' for a ceremony such as calling in the four directions.
- **What is the spirit or Goddess of Cacao?**

The spirit or Goddess of Cacao was one of the most revered of the ancient Mayan Deities. They called Cacao "The water that runs through the heart". It is a sacred medicinal plant of the Theobroma species. The generic name is derived from the Greek - theos (god) bromo (food) "Food of the Gods". Cacao is a gentle, yet powerful plant teacher, with much wisdom and joy to share with us.
- **Why is natural cacao bitter?**

Cacao is traditionally consumed bitter, without sweetener. The original Aztec name of the drink is "cacahuatl", which literally means "bitter water".
- **Why eat cacao beans, nibs or wafers in addition to the elixir drink?**

We are offering cacao beans in their more natural and original state, so that as you bite into the cacao and savor the flavor in your mouth you can become more consciously aware of how your body and the physical form of cacao are becoming one.
- **Why drink the elixir?**

A type of alchemy occurs when the cacao block is broken up, water is added and the mixture is heated to a hot, but not boiling temperature melting and merging the cacao into the water. Adding the element of water and fire to the earth element of the cacao bean is completed when the element of air is introduced by frothing the elixir. The spirit of cacao arises from the frothy topping.

Sacred Cacao Ceremony Handout FAQ continued

- **Why do I need to sign a waiver? Is it safe? What are the contraindications?**

You will be ingesting cacao in a slightly higher concentration than normally consumed. Cacao has active ingredients that bring about physiological changes for health and wellbeing and for possible health changes for which you need to provide informed consent to participate. Yes, it is safe for those who don't have health challenges – see below and discuss with your doctor.

Precautions:

If you have any significant health challenges (i.e. having chemotherapy treatment) or are on high levels of anti-depressants, this could preclude you from working with Cacao in a ceremonial context please check with your doctor. Cacao can contribute to a lowering of blood pressure, so if you are on blood pressure medicine, please check your medication contra-indicators.

Prescription Anti-depressants: Those that use MAO inhibitors to treat depression are contraindicated with chocolate. Check your medication to see if this is the case.

Serious Heart Conditions: cacao can slightly increase heart rate and is a vasodilator, so if you have a serious heart condition this is not an appropriate event.

Pregnant or breastfeeding: Please check with your doctor.

- **Is it psychedelic or a hallucinogen? No. However, some do consider it an entheogen.**

Here are some definitions: Wikipedia – entheogen: from Greek, literally meaning "generating the divine within". Urban Dictionary - entheogen is a term to be used in strict reverence of substances that act as divine sacraments and facilitate transcendent experiences versus recreational use.

- **What can I expect to experience physically?**

See contraindications. In ceremony you may experience a slightly increased heart rate, increased blood flow within your body causing some warming and then cooling body responses. Continued use or excessive use of cacao may cause a lowering of your blood pressure.

- **What can I expect to experience emotionally?**

Cacao benefits list the following neurotransmitters: serotonin, tryptophan, and dopamine which evoke feelings of wellbeing. The secret bliss component is anandamide, which in Sanskrit Ananda is translated as bliss. So now you know why eating chocolate is connected to opening your heart to love and bliss!

- **How long until the cacao effects reach my body?**

20 to 40 minutes is the normal time range.

- **How long will the effects last?**

For most you can expect to have heightened senses for 4 – 5 hours.

- **What do I bring?**

- Yoga mat, cushion, meditation back rest chair, blanket, pillow
- Crystals or sacred objects to surround yourself or to add to our altar such as rose quartz
- 'Drinking' bowl is the preferred way to drink cacao (or a cup or mug)
- Journal to record your journey

I have read and understand the contraindications mentioned in this handout and have consulted with appropriate health professionals and agree that I have taken all necessary precautions to safely participate in this ceremony. I understand that I am participating in this ceremony hosted by Amy Peck (aka Amalya), and presented by Jannine Oberg, Ana Rosvall and Peter Oberg, and I agree to assume full responsibility for any risk, injuries, damages known or unknown, physical or emotional, which I might incur as a result of my participation.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

NOTE: Answers are provided from various sources including our supplier of Guatemalan cacao.