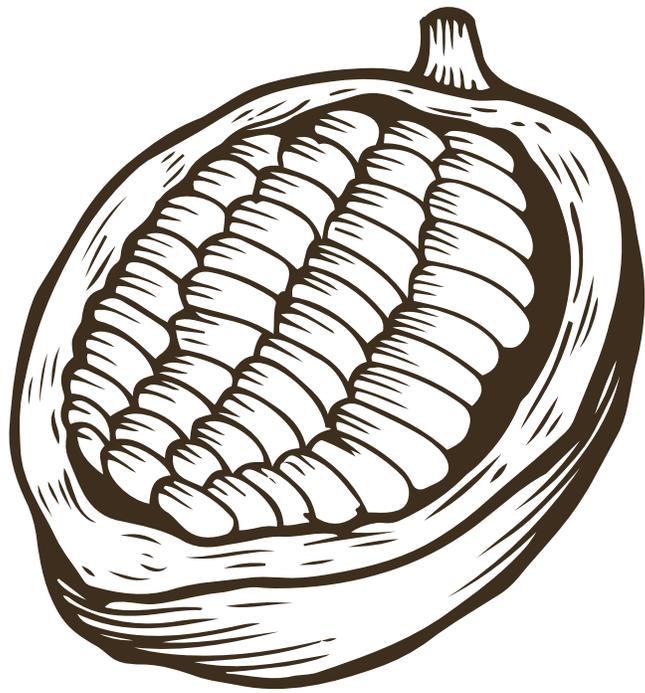


# More About Cacao



FROM *the* HEARTH 

The following information is  
provided by Heartblood Cacao.  
Please find them here!



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**Heartblood  
Cacao**  
Sharing The Love

# Ecology

The cacao tree grows in the 20/20 zone; a geographical area that is roughly 20 degrees south and 20 degrees north of the equator. Once the flowers of the tree are pollinated, they grow into cacao pods that are shaped like elongated cylinders. The pod has a hard, leathery exterior, and can range in color from yellows to reds and oranges. Inside the pod is cacao fruit and the cacao seeds.

Once the fruit of the cacao tree is ripe, the pods are harvested and cut open. Inside are 30-50 seeds, covered in a white pulpy substance, the fruit of the cacao tree. The cacao seeds are what cacao in all its forms (cocoa powder, cocoa butter, chocolate, etc.) come from.

The seeds are fermented, sun dried, roasted and ground into a paste. This product - to which nothing has been added or subtracted - is pure Cacao.

FROM <sup>the</sup> HEARTH



# Health Benefits

Cacao is truly a superfood with its relatively high levels of theobromine, magnesium, antioxidants, and love associated chemicals such as phenylethylamine & anandamide, making it truly a "food for the heart".

The medical and scientific buzz about chocolate began with studies of the Kuna, a group of indigenous islanders whose high-salt diet did not lead to high blood pressure. The early studies determined that Cacao was the cause, not genetics - the Kuna drink about an ounce of Cacao a day.

With Cacao, the heartbeat becomes pronounced, breathing is deepened and nourishing blood circulation is increased throughout the body. This increases physical and mental energy and endurance, arousing the senses and heightened awareness.

One of the main psychoactive compounds in cacao is Theobromine. I consider it a grounding stimulant. Unlike caffeine, theobromine is a gentle energetic release within the body and doesn't create cravings or cause you to feel a "crash".

FROM <sup>the</sup> HEARTH



# Health Benefits

Speaking of cravings, it is good to know that according to Ayurvedic Nutrition and their six taste components (sweet, salty, sour, pungent, bitter and astringent) that cacao is considered a bitter taste. If you tend to have those sweet cravings in life, consuming a bitter food like cacao will actually override your sweet cravings!

Cacao also contains the aptly named bliss molecule: anandamide. Ananda is derived from Sanskrit and translates as bliss, joy or happiness. Has anyone told you to eat chocolate to boost your mood? When a person feels true joy, the chemical anandamide is naturally produced in the brain. Anandamide is a neurotransmitter and the body's own natural antidepressant that creates blissful feelings. When you consume cacao, anandamide is released. Anandamide has only been found in two foods on earth so far, cacao and black truffles.

FROM *the* HEARTH



# Health Benefits

It's all about love - cacao contains phenylethylamine (PEA): a chemical that is naturally produced when a person falls in love and known as an aphrodisiac. PEA is a neurotransmitter and neuroregulator that plays an important role in regulating mood. Phenylethylamine also plays a part in increasing focus and alertness.

Cacao also contains tryptophan which is the sole precursor to serotonin, an essential compound that influences mood, cognition and behavior.

The combination of these compounds that make up cacao are what facilitates a person in a cacao ceremony. Because cacao works directly with your heart chakra, it is known as the sacred plant medicine to open your heart. It is known as a teacher plant and a powerful guide for inner work. There are many health benefits to cacao but more than that there are spiritual benefits.

FROM <sup>the</sup> HEARTH



# Health Benefits

Pure Cacao has recently been found to contain high levels of antioxidant polyphenols, oligomeric procyanidins and other flavonoids that help boost the immune system and offer significant protection against "bad" cholesterol and heart disease. It is also very nutritious, having a high protein content and is reported to be the richest natural source for magnesium, an important mineral highly deficient in modern diets. The raw seeds are also surprisingly high in vitamin C and an excellent source of natural sulfur, a mineral associated with healthy skin, nails, hair and proper liver and pancreas function.

While the medical profession is suggesting that people eat dark chocolate, they don't mention that most of the chocolate available has very low cacao content to begin with and often isn't processed well.

FROM *the* HEARTH



# Plant Spirit Medicine

Cacao has its own consciousness and we develop a relationship with it as we get to know it better and better. The modern form of cacao ceremony centers around drinking a rich cacao beverage to bring on its psychoactive effects. When we do, it's energy blends with our own to support us in a myriad of ways.

Psychedelics are like a trip we go on where another energy is in charge of the journey. In contrast, cacao is a subtler energy that is available to support you, without pushing you into something. Cacao gently supports you wherever you're at and with what's happening inside at any given moment. If you're in a "get things done" mode, it will enhance that. If you're in a creative mood, it will enhance that. If your focus is on slowing down and letting the gap in thinking appear, it will support that. If there are deeper feelings that need to move, it will support that. That's the beauty of cacao – it's versatile and nondirective. It will offer you a path to walk on but walking down that path is up to you.

FROM <sup>the</sup> HEARTH 



# Plant Spirit Medicine

Cacao is a multi-faceted medicine that supports us in various ways. Below is a list of ways it does so. However, in practice, it is all one experience, so the list below isn't really a series of separate experiences, but a unified energy working with us. That being said, it can be helpful in pin-pointing the various ways it supports us, so here are some of the ways that cacao supports our inner work.

## LOVE

There is no way to talk about cacao ceremony without talking about love. Cacao definitely brings on the love, and not just for the happy places. It brings it on for everything; for painful feelings, challenging thought patterns or the wailing sirens while you meditate. The love from cacao is all-encompassing and leaves nothing out. It's a full-bodied kind of love that needs no reason or excuse to express itself. It makes our heart smile simply because it feels good. It helps us say yes to life in all its glory. This love can be ecstatic and large, and it can be subtle and internal.

FROM *the* HEARTH



# Plant Spirit Medicine

## THE SENSES

Cacao helps bring us into a fuller sensory experience. We are more directly in touch with our body and its sensations, feelings and movements. This immersion into direct experience can be so full on that there is no sense of separation between mind/body and self/universe. We are experiencing it all directly in the flow, absent a divided thought pattern. It is not that 'I' am experiencing the body, or that the trees over there are swaying in the wind. It is all simply happening in our direct experience through the senses and feelings.

Not only does cacao bring us into the senses more fully, it also heightens them. Intimacy, touch, romance and arousal are intensified with cacao. We are more in touch with the body's pleasure and our ability to feed it, regardless of what is happening around us. We can experience sexual energy, and even orgasm, without any physical contact.

FROM *the* HEARTH



# Plant Spirit Medicine

## THE SENSES CONTINUED

Being so fully in our bodies silences the voices that tell us that our pleasure is shameful and private and helps us liberate the life-generating power these energies. We feel good feeling good, simply because it feels good! There is no need to justify the pleasure or find an external source for it, because it's all flowing within us.

## EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

Cacao supports a fuller and deeper connection with our feelings. In various ways, it presents opportunities to open to places that are painful, scary and blissful. With the loving acceptance flowing from the cacao, we are not pushing away our emotions the way we have been taught to do. Instead, we see them as a vital part of ourselves and so we can welcome them home and liberate ourselves from running away from them.

FROM *the* HEARTH



# Plant Spirit Medicine

## EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS CONTINUED

This is as true with the so called positive emotions, such as happiness and joy, as it is with the so called negative ones, grief, anger and fear. All are just energies that flow through us and inform us about our world and how to navigate it. Once the judgments are dropped, we can experience each more fully. When we open the doorway to feeling, it brings both the joy and the pain more fully, as our capacity for feeling does not differentiate.

Being able to connect more with our feelings allows us to acknowledge them and find safe ways to express them. When we do, we no longer need to hide from them or use our energy to keep them hidden. A part of ourselves is healed and made whole.

With cacao, emotions are more fluid and can move through us, instead of staying or becoming stuck in our body. The wild, vibrating, shaking, crying, raging energies can move, just like a storm, coming and then going.

FROM *the* HEARTH



# Plant Spirit Medicine

## BEING HELD

A way that people often experience the loving energy of cacao can be described as an experience of being held by the cacao. We are enveloped by its embrace and its love. Cacao has our back and reminds us that everything is okay. There is nothing amiss, even the thought that something is amiss.

This kind of support and safety allows us to open more deeply. We find that we are capable of facing the places within that are challenging or confusing, places we are habitually stuck or disconnected. The feeling of being held is critical to our growth, as it is the sense of being alone or unsupported that keeps us hurting and stagnant.

## ABUNDANCE

Cacao helps us shift from scarcity thinking to abundance thinking. We are more likely to perceive winwin scenarios, where we can mutually benefit with others, instead of getting ahead at others expense.

FROM *the* HEARTH 



# Plant Spirit Medicine

## ABUNDANCE CONTINUED

Possibilities are expanded to get our needs met, express ourselves and approach life situations with a loving energy. This is also true in how cacao wants to spread its energy. It wants the love to spread, and its indiscriminate in that. In my experience, cacao doesn't care if it spreads through intentional cacao ceremony or cheap chocolate. Much like how the tree itself is highly promiscuous in its cross-pollinating, the energetic quality of it is to share the love, regardless of how or with whom.

When we shift out of scarcity thinking, which tells us that our needs are in competition with others', we can open to a more expansive inner place where we're able to creatively problem solve and move in the world. I'm not talking about the 'everyone can be rich' kind of abundance, but a kind of inner orientation to life that doesn't feel stuck or stagnant based on limiting beliefs that aren't always accurate. This kind of abundance has more to do with an absence of a scarcity thinking than it does with getting something more in life. Cacao helps connect with that place where the love overflows and we don't need to hold on to an oppositional worldview.

FROM *the* HEARTH 



# Plant Spirit Medicine

## THE SPACE AROUND THOUGHT

Much of our time is spend in a stream of thought that happens without much awareness on our part. We are believing our own thinking because we are missing the spaciousness around our thinking, which reminds us that thoughts are not the whole picture.

The universe is a far vaster place than our limited angle on it, and we can know that experientially through the silence before, after and in-between thinking. It is this silence, this vast nothingness, that liberates us from the striving and suffering that comes from being caught up in our thinking. It frees us from struggling to maintain a self that is ultimately only a series of thoughts.

As cacao supports the opening of that gap, we are more able to experience both our feelings and the ease that comes from letting life be as it is.

FROM *the* HEARTH



# Plant Spirit Medicine

## CREATIVITY AND INSPIRATION

Cacao gives a strong boost to our creative impulse and inspiration, whatever that is. While a cacao ceremony can be ecstatic or reflective, it can also put us in a head space to get things done because our creativity is flowing and wants to be expressed. Whether it's poetry, designing some new program, writing or art, cacao helps us connect with an inspired place where we're excited and clear on a way to express ourselves.

## FOCUS

Cacao will enhance focus, making it easier to stay tuned in to something longer than we might otherwise. Whether that's holding attention on our breath longer during meditation, staying in the flow of music while dancing, or with the group energy during a marathon ceremony, cacao keeps us connected to what is in front of us.

This makes it easier to get things done, to stay present with the deeper inner experiences happening, and to keep focus on group process without checking out. There are both practical, daily benefits (like long distance driving), and subtle energetic ones (like staying present with our daily practice).

FROM *the* HEARTH 



# Contra-Indications

Before consuming cacao, be sure to understand it's contraindications and what to expect in working with it. Cacao is a plant medicine. Like any potent medicine, it is important to be mindful in its use. If in doubt about any serious contraindications, check with your doctor about how a higher dose of cacao might interact with medications or medical conditions.

In most cases, there are no concerns to be aware of. The pieces listed below are mainly a concern in higher doses, like when we use the cacao ceremonially. In these cases, the combination of potent cacao and a higher dose warrants some additional mindfulness.

Cacao is a strong bitter and stimulant, so there are some side effects to be aware of, as well as certain specific contra-indications.



# Contra-Indications

Since cacao is consumed in higher doses in ceremony, people might experience symptoms such as light-headedness, sweaty palms, headache or nausea. Simply slow down, drink water and practice self-care as needed until symptoms subside. Cacao is also mildly laxative in higher doses. In some cases, cacao can also stimulate detox symptoms. If this happens, take it as a blessing and drink plenty of water as your body lets go of whatever it didn't like. This will likely be accentuated for people on a raw diet or who are fasting. Go with lower doses in this case.

Certain anti-depressants are worth extra consideration. MAOI based anti-depressants are contraindicated with the tyramine in chocolate, so a larger dose of cacao is not recommended. MAOI based anti-depressants are first generation anti-depressants and are less common these days.

FROM <sup>the</sup> HEARTH



# Contra-Indications

People taking them are on a restricted diet that includes limiting or avoiding chocolate, so they should know if they can consume or not. Side effects could include more serious headache and nausea, so make sure to check medications first.

Additionally, there has been some concern with larger doses of cacao and SSRI type anti-depressants, because of the MAOI's in cacao. Specifically, the tryptophan, a type of MAOI which is a pre-cursor to serotonin has been cited by some as a possible contraindication. The research about this interaction is minimal, but studies on both the amounts of tryptophan in chocolate and how that might cause 'serotonin syndrome' don't indicate any problem. However, to be on the safe side, for those on SSRI's, we suggest consulting with your doctor and/or pharmacist regarding higher doses of cacao and to consider starting with low doses.

FROM *the* HEARTH 



# Contra-Indications

The tyramine in cacao is contraindicated with certain heart conditions, such as atrial fibrillation. As it relates to higher doses of cacao, this is not well studied, but people with certain heart conditions are advised to avoid foods high in tyramine, and chocolate sometimes shows up on these lists. I recommended erring on the side of caution and avoiding a ceremonial dose if you have a serious heart condition.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, like with coffee or tea, it is important to reduce the intake of stimulating foods. The theobromine in cacao, which is very similar to caffeine, has a stimulating effect. Thus, we recommend using lower dosages (ex. a maximum of 1oz in a ceremonial drink).

Pure cacao can be fatal to dogs (and possibly horses and parrots) so be sure to keep it away from pets.

If any symptoms do present, drink lots of water, get some rest and it will pass.

FROM *the* HEARTH



# Closing Thoughts

Each cacao journey is different and there is certainly no one correct or better experience. Cacao works with us where we're at and responds to our needs, sometimes at a deeper level than we are aware.

Sometimes the energy can be intense and euphoric, other times calm and reflective. Sometimes it can be spacious and still, other times creative and wanting to get stuff done.

The key is to follow whatever is happening and let go of pre-conceived notions if we have any. The more we work with whatever is coming up with cacao, the more easeful and deep it will be.

FROM <sup>the</sup> HEARTH



# Closing Thoughts

The path that cacao invites us to walk on might not always look like what we want it to. This is especially true if we expect a blissed-out journey and cacao shows us the places we're out of balance.

Like all inner work, it's helpful to check the expectations we have for an experience, because then we can be more open to the beauty and magic that is being presented to us. I've seen a wide range of experiences, some of which weren't pleasant at first, but that helped bring to light an imbalance that needed attention.

FROM *the* HEARTH



# Closing Thoughts

Ultimately, you will get to know cacao yourself and develop an intimate relationship with the plant on your own.

It is through these experiences that you will come to know this sweet energy yourself, and the various ways it works with your inner landscape.

Stay open, and cacao will support your growth and unfolding in beautiful ways.

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