

ANCIENT MEDICINES OF THE MAYA

K'aizalaj Okox and Ka'kau'



From Ancient Use to Modern Times



MARC-JOHN BROWN & LORNA LIANA



About This Guide to Sacred Cacao and Mushrooms

If you are intrigued by shamanism, sacred plant medicines, and expanded states of consciousness, and wish to incorporate more ceremony into your life without the personal commitment that powerful psychoactives require... then look no further than creating your own safe and legal ceremonies using the medicines of the ancient Maya – cacao and mushrooms.

Cacao is a superfood plant medicine that is making its way around the world through the neo-shamanic practice of sacred cacao ceremony. While the ancient Maya have long revered cacao as a sacrament reserved for priests and nobles, and Mayan art preserves its ritual significance to Mayan culture; knowledge of their ceremonial practices was lost with the collapse of Mayan civilization. The cacao ceremony movement that is expanding around the world is a recent phenomenon, yet one that has the ability to connect us with the healing and consciousness-expanding qualities of a plant medicine the ancient Maya have long held sacred.

In this guide, we'll also explore the ancient Mayan uses of **mushrooms** and how the practices around these sacred medicines have evolved. Today, communities all around the world combine cacao and mushrooms for a truly powerful experience and deep medicinal benefits. Psilocybin mushrooms, whether taken as a full dose or a microdose, have been used for thousands of years for healing purposes. When taken alongside cacao, they can take people on a visionary journey where the heart and mind intertwine.

Because we believe in the healing power of sacred plant medicines at EntheoNation, it is our hope to inspire you to share the magic of cacao and mushrooms with your community, by conducting sacred ceremonies that deepen your authentic connection with yourself and with others.





Modern Mayan ceremony with Tata Pedro & Nana Marina Cruz, Image Credit: Cacao Lab

The purpose of this guide is to:

- Introduce you to sacred plant medicines with wonderful healing properties and psychoactive qualities that are described as heart-opening, empathogenic and euphoric.
- Connect you to simple, yet powerful ways of sharing these sacred plant medicines with your friends, family and tribe, to enhance your experience of full-body presence and community connection.
- Inspire you to share the magic of cacao and mushrooms by hosting sacred ceremonies in your locale, and activate the expansion of love and community connection around the world through the power of shamanic ceremony.

With So Much Love,

Lorna Liana & Marc-John Brown



About Marc-John Brown



Marc-John Brown is a practitioner of modern shamanism since 2008. These studies have taken him to work, and be in contact with, the native tribes of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Korea and Malaysia. He has worked extensively with shamanic plant medicines since the year 2011 and he has assisted in the facilitation of ceremonies using the ancient plant medicines of Huachuma, Ayahuasca, Rapé and Mapacho, among others.

About Lorna Liana



Lorna Liana is new media strategist to sustainable brands, social ventures and visionary entrepreneurs, helping them attract their tribe and ignite a movement around their mission-driven businesses. Through podcasting, video blogging and social media, she shares the stories of both indigenous people and the world's foremost experts in psychedelic science, modern shamanism, and consciousness research to inspire each and every one of us to explore the depths of our minds, spirits, planet... and evolve.

About Mags Tanev



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What Is a Cacao Ceremony?

While the ancient Maya have long treasured cacao as a sacred medicine, cacao ceremonies are a more recent phenomenon that are taking over yoga communities, conscious festivals and New Age hotspots like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Byron Bay, Goa and Bali by storm.

Originally native to the foothills of the South American Andes, cacao dispersed northwards with ease throughout Central America, where it was eventually discovered by Westerners in Guatemala. In 2003, a former geologist by the name of Keith, who now calls himself the Chocolate Shaman, was visited by the Spirit of Cacao, who invited him to "to rediscover what ancient Central and South American societies knew and celebrated: Pure, Ceremonial Grade Cacao has the power to open the heart, clear the mind, and produce a joyful and gentle euphoria that makes all of life's spiritual, creative and productive endeavors easier and more fun."

Keith began experimenting with cacao, and sharing it with friends and his holistic therapy clients, before inviting people to cacao ceremonies for group processing work. These cacao ceremonies encouraged many to return home and share cacao with their friends and communities, many choosing to offer cacao ceremonies in their own unique way. Keith eventually started offering cacao ceremony facilitator training as well as his own brand of ceremonial grade cacao.

The cacao ceremony has become a global neo-shamanic movement, with more and more ceremonialists and facilitators offering this sacred plant medicine around the world.





The Difference Between Cocoa and Cacao

Most of us have drunk hot cocoa before, so what is the difference between a cocoa-based beverage and a sacred ceremonial cacao beverage?

Simply put, "cacao" refers to the raw, unsweetened, beans, which are fermented and dried. Raw cacao can be found as whole beans, chopped into "nibs", or powdered. Raw cacao powder is cold-pressed, which keeps the beneficial enzymes, antioxidants, flavonoids, any other active healing and nutritional compounds of the cacao beans intact. Raw unsweetened cacao tastes bitter and is invigorating like coffee.

By contrast, cocoa starts off the same as cacao, but is then roasted at high temperatures, which results in a sweeter flavor and different health effects. The chocolate bars, desserts, and drinks we know and love is made from cocoa. Because chocolate is a massive industry, cocoa tends to be cheaper than cacao and a bit easier to find. However, much of it has added sugars, added sugars, dairy products, artificial sweeteners, high fructose corn syrup, or emulsifiers – "fillers" companies use to enhance the flavor and reduce production costs.

Pure ceremonial grade cacao can be mildly psychoactive, because it's made from high-quality raw beans, and drunk in large quantities. The cacao drink that is used for ceremonies is made from raw cacao beans mixed with chili or cayenne pepper and a sweetener like agave or honey.

When consumed in "ceremonial" quantities (over 40 grams), the mixture produces a wide range of reactions, from feelings of love, joy, ecstasy and connectedness, and even induce visions, intuitive hits, and cosmic downloads, according to devotees of the practice.

Nowadays, high-quality grade cacao is available globally and is not reserved exclusively for the upper classes. And with a whole array of different ingredients available to us, we have the chance to really get the best from our cacao-drinking experience! Below I'm going to share with you a very effective recipe for preparing ceremonial-grade cacao as a sacred beverage.





The Ancient History of Cacao

While it might be disappointing to discover that the cacao ceremony you attended was a recent invention, and not an unbroken wisdom lineage – know that in all likelihood, the ancient Maya also consumed cacao ritualistically.

Cacao was one of the most treasured and revered foods of Mesoamerica. With its earliest known use being traced to the Olmec people in around 1900 BCE, other tribes known to have held cacao – widely known as a sacred plant medicine – integral to their culture are the Aztec and the Maya, among several others.

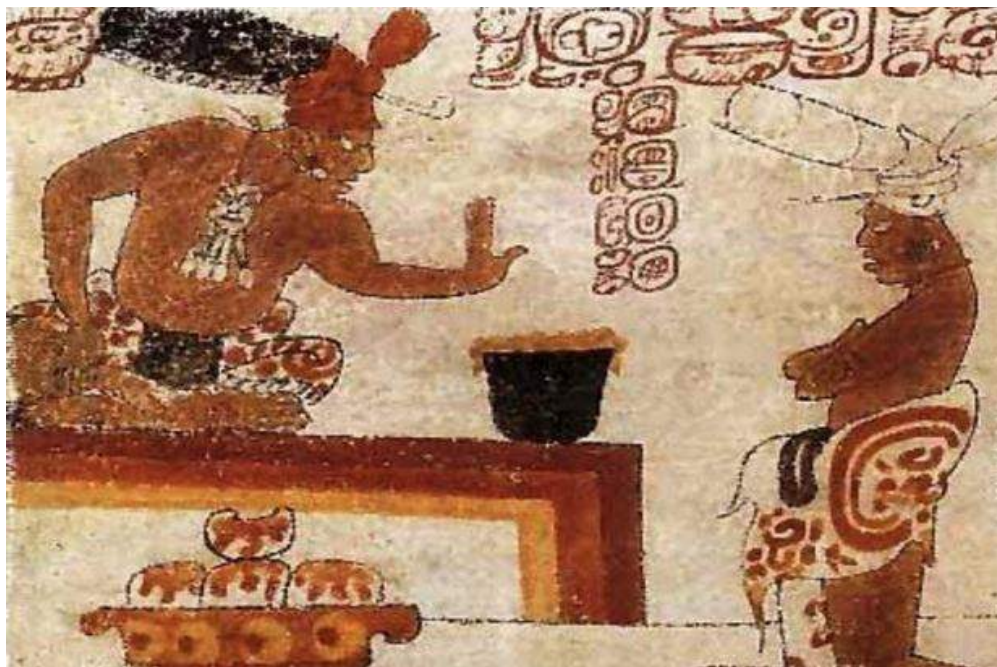
So treasured were pure cacao beans that they were often used in acts of trading and exchange. They became a form of currency for the Aztec people, and were so precious and desired that they even became counterfeited, being hollowed out and having their interior re-filled with lower-grade substitutes such as sand. Being used as a currency, it is known that 30 cacao beans could buy one rabbit to feed a family, or for more abundant offerings of meat, 200 beans could afford a whole turkey. In liquid form and used as a drink, it is widely agreed among many scholars that cacao, at least raw cacao in its purest form, was exclusive to Mesoamerican nations' upper classes and was very much held as a symbol of status and superiority. For its consumption, the Maya used tall, elegant cylindrical beakers, often with their rim decorated in text that stated the beakers' intended use – whether that be for sacred ceremonies, weddings, or more commonly to be drunk socially after meal times, often accompanied by the smoking of tobacco.

The preparation of this sacred drink included the fermentation of cacao beans, before curing them, roasting them and grinding them into a powder to be mixed with hot water. It was most commonly consumed as a warm, frothy drink, with the froth being created by way of vigorous whisking with a predominantly wooden tool. The liquid was then passed back-and-forth between one receptacle and another, in order to create maximum smoothness. Although bitter on its own, this warm, frothy liquid form of cacao was able to be flavoured with other ingredients, such as vanilla, ground chilli peppers, honey, herbs, maize, flowers, or a form of fermented sap (usually alcoholic) from the agave cactus, known as Octli.



Cacao in Ancient Mayan Medicine

Personal, emotional, spiritual and community well-being among Mayan populations have always been an intricate tapestry of practices. They involve mind, body, spirituality, ritual, ceremony, rites of passage... and more importantly, the relationship between human beings and plants. And although all of these tenets of human longevity are relevant and important to everyone, the practices that cultivated them were, historically, exercised by only a select few. These were what are today known as "shamans," and came from what was considered to be a lineage of "elders" or "priests," inheriting their positions in society and receiving extensive, often lifelong and very taxing and ruthless forms of education – many of which involved the above-mentioned rites of passage.



A Maya lord forbids an individual from touching a container of chocolate



These shamans were the medics of mind, body and spirit. Medics of consciousness. They were brokers of exchanges between the physical world and the world of spirits, practicing sorcery for the purpose of healing, foresight and manipulation of natural phenomena. They were masters of ch'ulel, the ancient Mayan word for "life force energy" – what is known in Eastern traditions as "chi", "ki" or even "prana". Their practices were the perfect intersection between spirituality and vast amounts of medical knowledge and skill. For example, on a physical level they were known to be able to use human hair for the suturing of wounds, or combine plant and animal products into concoctions that were used to cure specific ailments. And on a spiritual level, they saw the ingestion of specific species of plants as a way to access higher states of consciousness, or the "spirit world". Of the many such plants that the Mayans used for these purposes, one of the more subtle but very powerful ones was the cacao plant. This, the very rawest form of chocolate and a deeply sacred medicine for the Mayans, is said to help human beings gain direct access to the realms of their hearts.

In ancient Mayan folklore, there is a legend. The legend tells that when there was an imbalance between humans and nature, cacao would emerge from the rainforest to help people open their hearts and return the planet to a state of harmony and balance.





The Medicinal Benefits of Cacao

A systematic review of studies, published in Nutrition Reviews in 2013, showed that cacao could significantly influence cognitive function and states of mood. Some of these studies indeed reveal a marked improvement in mood state or reduction of negative moods.



Cacao, cacao nibs, cocoa powder, white and dark chocolate

The mood improvement aspect of cacao is mainly due to an important chemical, anandamide, which is widely known as the "bliss molecule." Other studies clearly demonstrated evidence of cognitive enhancement, as well as alterations in brain activation patterns. Mood states and their associated emotions are big factors in maintaining good states of health. So as you can see, this amazing plant – the root of what has become one of the world's favourite foods – contains a whole lot of health and medicinal benefits. We can really see now why up to this day, cacao is still widely known as a sacred plant medicine. But this is truly just touching the surface!





See below for a whole range of other health and medicinal benefits of cacao:

Cacao is an aphrodisiac. Another one of cacao's mood-enhancing compounds is phenethylamine, which triggers the release of endorphins and pleasurable opium-like neurochemicals. These are often produced naturally during the act of falling in love or during sexual activity. So when we say that cacao helps us access our hearts, as you can see we really do activate the love realms!

Cacao helps prevent cardiovascular disease. A strong protective antioxidant found in cacao is flavanol. It helps protect the heart against cardiovascular disease, reduces the risk of stroke and helps improve blood circulation.

The variety of antioxidants in cacao, known as polyphenols, help to reduce "bad cholesterol" and prevent hardening of the arteries. As a matter of fact, cacao is known to have more antioxidants than blueberries!

Cacao is a great source of iron. Cacao is the plant with the highest amounts of iron known to man, with 7.3mg per 100g. That's more than the amount of iron we get from beef or lamb (2.5mg) and also spinach (3.6mg). Due to cacao's iron being non-heme, it is recommended to combine it with some other source of vitamin C. For example, camu-camu, gubinge, or just some oranges or kiwi fruit.

Cacao has more calcium than cow's milk. At 125ml per 100g, cow's milk offers less calcium than raw organic cacao, which contains 160mg per 100g. A strong argument for ditching the lattes and jumping on a delicious and nutritious cup of this plant-based power!

Cacao helps prevent sunburn. Scientists at a London University recently found that people who ate 20 grams of cacao over a 12-week period were able to stay in the sun for twice the amount of time as opposed to those who didn't - without getting sunburned!

Cacao helps fight tooth decay. Scientists at Tulane University recently ran studies showing that extracts of cacao powder were even more effective than fluoride in the prevention of tooth cavities. The plant's crystalline extract, which is similar to caffeine, helps to harden the tooth enamel.





Cacao improves digestion. This is due to the fibre found in raw cacao, which stimulates the body's digestive enzymes.

Cacao contains plenty of healthy fats. The healthy fats found in cacao are similar to the monounsaturated fats found in olive oil. We need these fats to help create chemical reactions in our bodies for growth, immune function and metabolic function.

The list of cacao's health and medicinal benefits above is still only just scratching the surface; we'd probably need a whole separate Ebook to cover all of its benefits. But I hope this gives a solid insight into what a nutritional powerhouse this truly delicious medicinal plant actually is! And as we all know, being in a state of good physical health is the perfect breeding ground for cultivating our spiritual health. Therefore, the spiritual benefits of cacao go hand-in-hand with the health benefits of cacao.



Tony Moss & friends performing at an I.AM.LIFE Soul Circle Cacao Ceremony





What Makes Cacao the “Love Drug”

“While there are a great many agents in nature which boost libido and enhance sexual function, chocolate alone actually promotes the brain chemistry of being in love.”

– Chris Kilham

What makes chocolate, and raw cacao in particular, induce the experience of love? Cacao not only is a nutrient and antioxidant packed superfood, it also acts as an antidepressant and a mood enhancer. There are several active compounds in cacao that enhance mood, stimulate pleasure, promote relaxation and trigger the feeling of love. These include biogenic amines such as serotonin, tryptophan, phenylethylamine, tyrosine, tryptamine and tyramine. The concentration of these compounds increases during fermentation and decreases during roasting and alkalization, which is why the psychoactive properties of raw cacao are more enhanced than in processed chocolate.

The 5 psychostimulants most attributed to cacao’s “love effect” are:

- Caffeine
- Theobromine
- Phenylethylamine
- Anandamide
- Tryptophan, which is a pre-cursor to serotonin

The two most active compounds found in cacao that enhance the mood and the mind are caffeine and theobromine. Depending on the quality of the cacao, 1 cup of raw cacao powder (86g) contains approximately 198 mg of caffeine, and 1769 mg of theobromine.

Caffeine

Caffeine is an alkaloid, and is the most widely consumed stimulant on earth.

Caffeine, when taken by adults at no more than 300 milligrams a day, is safe and has numerous health benefits. Cacao is a modest source of caffeine, and contains less caffeine than coffee.

Caffeine stimulates the central nervous system and the flow of blood in the brain, as well as enhancing cardiovascular function and respiration. It also increases the





production of serotonin, an important neurotransmitter that is believed to help regulate mood and social behavior, appetite and digestion, sleep, memory, and sexual desire and function. Low serotonin has been linked to depression. Activities that elevate serotonin levels also have a positive impact on mood. These caffeine-fueled biochemical interactions result in enhanced alertness, thought formation, and mood.

Theobromine

Theobromine is chemically similar to caffeine (they are related alkaloids) and occurs at a much greater concentration than caffeine in raw cacao and chocolate. Like caffeine, theobromine is a diuretic and also stimulates the central nervous system stimulant, though it is milder in its effects. Theobromine is a stronger cardiac stimulant than caffeine and also acts as a muscle relaxant.

Overall, compared to caffeine, theobromine is much gentler and longer-lasting, and there is no coffee crash.

In addition to caffeine and theobromine, other stimulants found in cacao also play mood enhancing roles, as “backup singers” to the two primary alkaloids. These include the mood-enhancing compound phenylethylamine, also known as the “love drug,” and a compound called anandamide, also known as the “bliss molecule.”

Phenethylamine

The mood-enhancing compound phenethylamine (PEA) is the most influential love-inducing compound in cacao. This chemical, which occurs in cacao in small quantities, packs a powerful punch. Not only does PEA stimulate the nervous system, it also triggers the release of endorphins, which are the pleasurable opium-like compounds that humans release during sex and when they are falling in love. Phenylethylamine, which acts like an amphetamine, also stimulates your brain cells to release dopamine.

In his article “Chocolate, the Love Drug,” Chris Kilham, the “Medicine Hunter,” states:

“PEA also potentiates the activity of dopamine, a neurochemical directly associated with sexual arousal and pleasure. PEA acts as a potent antidepressant in both sexes and rises during periods of romance. The giddy, restless feelings that occur when we are in love are due to a great extent to PEA, which significantly increases in the brain at that time, and when we achieve orgasm.”





Anandamide

Anandamide is a neurotransmitter that produces a feeling of euphoria. In Sanskrit, Ananda means "bliss," making this neurotransmitter the "bliss chemical." Both cacao and cannabis contain this bliss-inducing chemical. Anandamide is also released naturally in the brain when we are feeling happy. Here's a fun fact: in the human brain, anandamide also binds to the same receptor sites as THC from cannabis. Chocolate and cannabis, anyone?

Serotonin

Raw cacao not only contains the neurotransmitter serotonin, it also boosts the body's natural production of serotonin. Raw cacao also contains magnesium and tryptophan, which are both necessary precursors for the production of serotonin.

MAO Inhibitors

Finally, in addition to containing serotonin, anandamide and phenylethylamine, cacao also contains chemicals called MAO inhibitors, which slow down the breakdown of these very same feel-good neurotransmitters in the body's digestive tract, ensuring they are absorbed into the body and reach the brain.

While not everyone who consumes raw cacao will get sexually aroused, cacao does enhance one's ability to fall in love with life, simply by increasing your ability to feel good, experience bliss, and relax.





Cacao – a Sacred Plant Teacher

The ancient Maya considered cacao to be sacred medicine, and to this day, cacao is regarded as a potent Master Plant. In the tradition of plant medicine shamanism, it is possible to connect with the spirit of the sacred Plant Teacher that is cacao, by relating to it as a sacrament and consuming it in ceremony.

When relating to sacred cacao medicine in this way, you can unlock the spiritual benefits of a deepening apprenticeship with this Master Plant Teacher. Here are some of the benefits you can receive from cultivating a deeper, spiritual relationship with cacao, by setting specific intentions for your ritual:

Holistic Healing. In addition to its nutrient-packed health benefits, regular ceremonial cacao consumption can encourage harmony and balance between mind, body and spirit, through the combination of intention setting, prayer, meditation, and dance. Tune into any messages cacao may have for you around unhealthy habits you can release, in order to invite more health and happiness into your life.

Creative Activation. When drinking cacao, especially when you specifically set the intention for increased creativity, you may find that you are being more open to inspiration, creativity and new ideas. New meaning and purpose in everything begins to surface, and that there are more insights to be tapped into.

Deepen Meditation. When focusing only on ingesting and connecting with your cacao drink, a bigger connection to your inner spirit and wisdom is forged. This allows for more profound levels of meditation, as focus is easily maintained on the very present moment. Cacao's calming effects can really take place here, and begin remedying the imbalances of your mind and soul.

Expansion of Inner Peace. Similar to the above, cacao allows you to be more in tune with your positive and optimistic side. You may find yourself feeling more capable of dealing and dissolving life's difficulties and hardships.



Increasing Vitality. Cacao provides us with plenty of vitality and what the Maya called 'Ch'ulel' – life force energy. It is an energy that provides focus and mental clarity, and if sustained, helps us to control unhealthy cravings that actually rob us of our energy levels, and allows for a bigger channel for the above-mentioned creative flow.

With all of these amazing benefits coming from one single source. It is obvious why cacao is considered to be a sacred plant medicine, and why it was so revered and treasured by the ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica.



Cocoa powder, cacao beans and nibs.



How to Make a Sacred Cacao Beverage for Ceremony

To unlock the psychoactive effects of ceremonial grade cacao, you will need about 40 grams per serving, which is approximately 3 heaped tablespoons of raw cacao powder per cup. Each recipe contains ingredients to make two servings of cacao beverage. If this is your first time working with ceremonial cacao, you may want to start off with a smaller amount, and work your way up.



Sacred ceremonial cacao being served at an I.AM.LIFE Soul Circle Cacao Ceremony





Spicy Maca Hot Cacao Drink

This is a sweet, tasty cacao beverage recipe.

Ingredients:

6 heaped tablespoons raw, organic cacao powder (or paste)
2 cups hot water (alternatives: almond milk or coconut water)
2 tablespoons of honey (or coconut sugar)
1 - 2 tablespoons organic coconut oil
2 teaspoons of maca powder
½ teaspoon of organic vanilla extract
Cayenne pepper to taste

Optional:

Pinch of cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, turmeric, or a dash of orange zest

Directions:

1. Heat the water over a medium heat, and once hot add the cayenne pepper
2. Once the pot is simmering, remove from heat then pour into a blender
3. Add in the remaining ingredients except for the optional ingredients
4. Pour the mixture into your mug of choice
5. Sprinkle with any of the extra options above and enjoy!

It's helpful to have a spoon or stirring stick to keep the consistency even as you consume, since the cacao will surely settle at the bottom over time.

Also, to have a smoother and well mixed cacao drink, always use a blender/nutrient extractor, as opposed to other methods of mixing/grinding. You can also change the consistency of your drink, if you want a thicker consistency and more taste of cacao, use less water but if you want a thinner consistency, add more water.

** Props to Sharon Ramel, creator of Udemy's top selling shamanism course, for this yummy recipe*

[Click for cacao!](#)



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for 10% off!





Medicinal Earth Blend

This is a savory, medicinal cacao beverage (recipe from Keith the Cacao Shaman).

Ingredients:

6 heaped tablespoons of raw, organic cacao powder or paste
2 cups of water
2 tablespoons of Maya nut
1 tablespoon of turmeric
2 teaspoons of licorice root
2 tablespoons of coconut oil
2-4 pinches black pepper & sea salt

Directions:

1. Heat the water over a medium heat until 'finger warm'
2. Add the black pepper and sea salt
3. Pour into blender/nutrient extractor
4. Add in the remaining ingredients and blend it up
4. Pour the mixture into your mug of choice and enjoy

Avocado Bliss Cacao Drink

This is the perfect morning smoothie recipe to jumpstart your day, or for cacao ceremony on a hot summer day.

Ingredients:

6 heaped tablespoons of raw, organic cacao powder or paste
1 cup coconut milk
1 cup coconut water
1-2 teaspoons of organic ghee (optional but delicious and healthy)
1 whole ripe and creamy avocado
1-2 tablespoons of honey to taste

Directions:

Throw everything into a blender, but add the liquids gradually, in order to create a smooth consistency. Enjoy.





Cacao Contraindications

While raw cacao is safe for most people, it is a strong, bitter, caffeine-rich stimulant that can also elicit adverse side effects in some people when consumed in high quantities. This can include lightheadedness, sweaty palms, headache or nausea, as well as detoxification reactions, such as bowel movements. Certain antidepressants, such as MAO inhibitors, may not react well with the tyramine in the cacao. Someone who eats a high quantity of cacao after taking an MAO inhibitor may experience a sharp rise in blood pressure. Anyone with serious heart conditions will want to go lighter on the cacao, since the caffeine and theobromine can increase your heart rate. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are recommended to reduce their consumption of stimulants. Simply consuming more water will dilute the effects of the cacao, and reduce undesirable symptoms.



Cacao pods





How to Hold Your Own Cacao Ceremony

Because cacao ceremony is more a neo-shamanic phenomenon, and not a ritual handed down via an unbroken lineage of initiated wisdomkeepers, anyone can hold a sacred cacao ceremony in pretty much any format. You can hold your own personal cacao ceremony, to deepen your connection to your higher self. Or you can invite people over, and deepen your authentic connection with others.

Whether you are holding ceremony for yourself or others, are some basic ceremonial guidelines to follow:

Step 1: Create a Sacred Space

When holding any type of sacred ceremony, it is always important to open the sacred space and set the intention. Choose a place in your home – or wherever you are – as your dedicated “sacred spot”.

Gather and organize the layout of any sacred objects you wish to have to accompany you in the sacred spot. These may include any crystals you connect with, divination cards, incense sticks, essential oils, natural objects such as stones or leaves, relics, photos of loved ones or people you wish to heal relationships with, orgonite to keep the magnetic fields clear in the sacred spot, or any other object you would consider sacred to you.

When creating your sacred space, it's nice to have an altar as a centralizing focus for your ceremonial activities. This is a great place for your cacao beverage to be placed, and from which to serve it.





Step 2: Clear the Sacred Space

Use a space-cleansing substance to clear the energies of the air in and around the sacred spot. You can use a bundle of Californian White Sage, to "smudge" the area by burning one end and spreading the smoke with a sacred feather. Burning copal resin in an incense burner with a hot coal is also nice, and culturally appropriate, as copal is also used as a sacred incense in Mesoamerica. However, an incense stick or essential oil, such as peppermint, rosewood or myrrh will also work.

Step 3: Smudge Yourself & Others

Once the space is cleansed and your sacred objects are in place, the next step is to use your sacred smoke to cleanse people. You will want to fan sacred smoke over the individual (or yourself) from head to toe, and then turn the person around, to smudge their back. Try not to miss any zones. If you are the host, you will want to smudge yourself first.

Step 4: Protect the Space & the People In It with an Invocation

Many sacred plant medicine ceremonies start the work with an invocation that establishes the space as a container only for the energy of the highest vibration. This intention creates a resonance that protects against negative energy and interference from negative spirits. Here is a short invocation you may use.

***In the infinite circle of the Divine Presence which
completely envelops us, we affirm that there is only
one presence here:***

Love



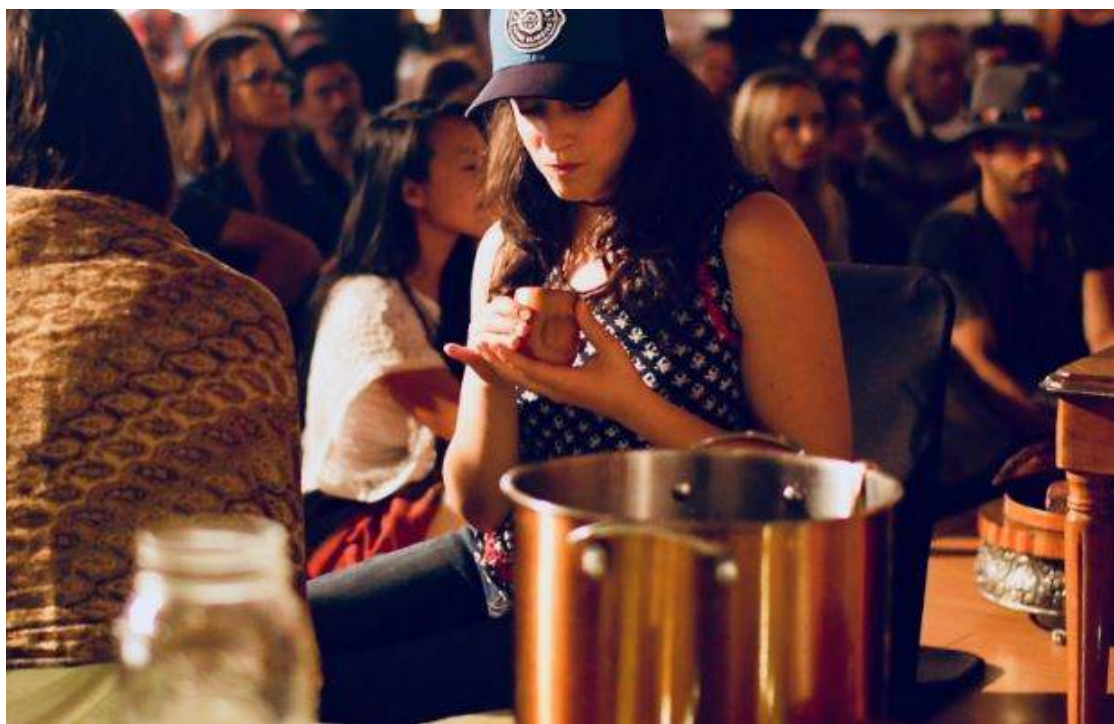


Step 5: Set an Intention or Shared Group Prayer

Close your eyes and tune into your intention. What do you wish to gain from this ceremony? What outcome do you wish to achieve? Is there anything on which you need clarity? Do you need to heal a relationship? Are you looking to heal and/or overcome a specific wound or damaging behavioural pattern? Set the intention here before commencing the ceremony.

If there are any deities, gods or spirits which you specifically connect with, take the time to intentionally invite them into the space and summon their powers, gifts, and blessings. Turn to all four directions (North, East, South, and West), as well as above and below, taking time with each one to invite in the natural energies, powers, gifts and blessings of all directions, all over the world, in the sky and in the Earth below.

Then place your hand over your heart and focus on all of the powers that you hold deep within yourself. Invite these powers into the sacred space. Invite all of these powers to hold and maintain the sacred space for you as you conduct your ceremony.



I.AM.LIFE Cacao Ceremony Soul Circle





Step 6: Bless the Medicine

When preparing the medicine to be served, either to yourself or to the group, take a moment to first bless the medicine. With the power of your intention, concentrate the qualities of love, healing, compassion, nourishment, gratitude, joy, or anything positive, uplifting and good that you wish energetically steeped into this cup, pitcher or pot of sacred ceremonial cacao.

If you are passing cups of cacao around in a circle, you can also ask that each ceremony participant send their love, and positive intentions into the cup as it passes into their hands, and onto the next person. That way, the sacred beverage is infused with the prayerful intentions of each person in the group.

Step 7: Commune with the Medicine

Now it's time to drink your own cup of sacred medicine. Sit in your sacred spot with your cup of sacred cacao, and be fully present with the brew. Pray and connect with any of the sacred objects you have brought into the sacred spot, as well as all of the powers you have invited into the sacred space – the ones from all directions who are holding the space for you. Pray and connect to the wider universe and to the spirit of cacao herself, as you ingest the brew. Always bring your focus and attention back to your intention.

Ask and pray for the answers you seek, the healing you need, or the insight you desire. Carry on this process of deep meditation and connection until you feel intuitively that the process is complete.

Sip your sacred cacao drink mindfully. If it's a thick brew, you can chew it to activate the digestive process in your mouth. Enjoy every delicious, nourishing, mouthful.





Step 8: Transition to Music

Many cacao ceremonies transition to breathwork, medicine song circles, Ecstatic Dance, or some kind of movement based activity. The reason why this works so well is that the euphoria-inducing cacao provides a great foundation, from which to heighten one's bliss through complementary activities that ground you in your body, like breathwork, yoga, massage or dance. Whichever activity you choose, even if it is just turning on your Spotify playlist, the time to do this is after everyone has been served their drink and had a moment to mindfully consume it.

If there is leftover cacao, it is usually available at the altar for anyone who feels like they want some more.

Step 9: Close the Circle

After your movement based activity is complete, it is up to you, as the host, to indicate that the ceremony is coming to a close. In an Ecstatic Dance style ceremony, this is usually when the DJ starts to transition to downtempo, chillout music, and people start sitting or lying down on the floor. After the last song is complete, the MC will invite everyone to get into a circle. This is the time to make any closing remarks, to invite your participants to share their experience, and to express gratitude.

Give gratitude and take a few moments to reflect on any insights you may have received. And then gently, with gratitude always, close the sacred space by releasing all of the elemental powers you invited in from all directions (including your own personally-honored gods, spirits, or deities). A nice way to end is with a group hug.

Your ceremony is complete!





Where to Find Cacao Ceremonies

Because sacred cacao ceremony is a neo-shamanic phenomenon that is expanding around the world, you can find many different forms of this practice, that incorporate activities such as Ecstatic Dance, oracle card divination or medicine song circles.



Aurore Sunrise's 5-Rhythms Dance & Cacao Ceremony in a sea cave, Ibiza, Spain

Different cacao ceremony facilitators have emerged to offer their own unique ritual experiences. Most offer ceremony experiences locally, but some facilitators do travel and offer ceremonies internationally, often following the transformational festival circuit. If you are intrigued by the diversity of cacao ceremony offerings and would like to find out where you can participate in one, here are some places to check:

- Yoga studios
- Community centers, like Alchemist Kitchen in New York, the Open Center
- Conscious festivals, like Bali Spirit Festival, Envision Festival, Boom Festival, Symbiosis
- Meetup.com
- Facebook Local
- Google "cacao ceremony" + "your locale"





Ancient Mayan Use of Psilocybin Mushrooms

Like other Mesoamerican cultures, such as the Aztecs and Mazatecs, the Mayans also used hallucinogenic mushrooms in ritual settings, known to them as *k'aizalaj Okox* and to the Aztecs as *teonanàcatl*. These mushrooms contain the entheogenic compound psilocybin and cause the user to undergo mystical experiences and visual hallucinations.

Archeologists and researchers have discovered Mayan mushroom stones that date back over 3000 years across Central America.[1] The stones are decorated with different figures, including a human face or animal, as part of the stipe, and have a mushroom cap-shaped top. While the stones were first considered to be phallic representations, many researchers now believe that these stones were used as part of a Mayan mushroom cult.[2]

In addition to the mushroom stones, there is also evidence of ancient Mayan mushroom use in Mayan art such as the Tepantitla mural in Teotihuacán, which shows distinct imagery of hallucinogenic mushrooms.[3] Mushrooms have made an appearance in other examples of Mayan art too, including ones that depict human sacrifice in the Dresden and Madrid codices.

In *Fantastic Fungi*, Paul Stamets explains that:

"Mayan culture was very mycophilic, and they revered mushroom stones for divination, for spirituality, and also to be able to predict incoming armies and how to strategize against them."

Today, ritualistic use of mushrooms continues in a few villages in the region of the Sierra Mazatec in Mexico, after being strongly condemned by the Spanish clergy during the period of colonization. However, it's worth noting the religious influence on indigenous use of these mushrooms, which are today referred to as "niños santos" – sacred children.





Combining Mushrooms with Cacao

While it is not known whether ancient Mayan civilizations combined psilocybin mushrooms and cacao, there is ample evidence that the Aztecs consumed these two compounds together. The Nahuatl word for hallucinogenic mushrooms, *teonanácatl*, translates to “flesh of the gods,” while their word for cacao, *cacáhuatl*, means “food of the gods.”

Combining the plant teacher cacao with psilocybin-containing mushrooms can intensify and give more depth to the psychedelic experience. It is traditionally thought that while cacao opens the heart, psilocybin mushrooms open the mind – making for a very powerful encounter.

Cacao contains MAOIs (monoamine oxidase inhibitors), which increase the circulation of serotonin in the brain, allowing for this natural synergy and boosting the effects of the psilocybin. The natural fats present in cacao also allow the body to better absorb and process the mushroom’s active components and experience the full effects of the psilocybin.

As the medicinal and therapeutic properties of both medicines have become more widely known in recent years, many New Age-type ceremonies are popping up in hotspots like LA, San Francisco, Bali, or Thailand. Neo-shamans all over the world are now hosting ceremonies where participants combine the ancient Mayan medicines of cacao and psilocybin mushrooms.

Microdosing with psilocybin mushrooms and cacao

While many seeking to experience the power of psilocybin and cacao will opt for a full psychoactive dose, others are choosing to combine cacao with a microdose of mushrooms. A microdose of mushrooms is a sup-perceptual dose, usually between 1/10th or 1/20th of a usual dose. Though given that cacao can intensify the effects of psilocybin, this should generally be a lower amount than normal.

Cacao helps connect to the heart and can make people feel uplifted, while a microdose of psilocybin mushrooms can boost mood, creativity, and energy levels. In combination, these two ancient medicines can create powerful feelings of vitality and connection, even when taken at lower doses.





Combining non-psychedelic mushrooms and cacao

In addition to blending psychedelic mushrooms with cacao, many people are now also combining the rich medicinal properties of cacao with those of non-psylocybin-containing mushrooms.

For example, products are hitting the market which contain raw cacao and other fungi such as reishi, lion's mane, chaga, turkey tail, and cordyceps. These medicinal mushrooms are packed full of antioxidants, support cognitive function and energy levels, have anti-inflammatory properties, and help balance gut bacteria.




While not historically taken in traditional settings, these new formulas show promise in supporting physical health and brain function and are growing in popularity.

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How to Make an Immunity-Boosting Cacao Mushroom Drink

If you're seeking the medicinal properties of mushrooms and cacao but not the psychoactive journey that comes along with psilocybin, we recommend making your own hot cacao drink with a superfood mushroom blend.

Here's a recipe to rustle up your own delicious drink, with all of the antioxidants – and none of the tripping.

Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon mushroom powder (we love [this mushroom blend mix from Four Sigmatic](#) – use code ENTHEO for 15% off)
- 1 teaspoon maple syrup, honey, raw sugar, or other sweetener of choice
- 2 tablespoons cacao powder
- 1 pinch cinnamon
- 1 pinch sea salt
- A heavy dash of plant-based milk, like almond or soy

Directions:

1. Blend the cacao, mushroom blend, sweetener, cinnamon, salt, and non-dairy milk in a small blender.
2. Pour into a mug, add hot water, and mix well.
3. Enjoy!

For a slightly simpler option, check out [Four Sigmatic's mushroom cacao with reishi mix](#) – simply add hot water and non-dairy milk and it's ready!



[Click here and use code "ENTHEO" on checkout for 15% off Four Sigmatic products!](#)





How Do Magic Mushrooms Work With Cacao in Ceremony?

Combining psilocybin mushrooms and cacao in a ceremonial setting can be a very powerful experience. As explained, the cacao has the power to bring more depth to the mushroom journey, enhancing mood and intensifying effects.

Facilitators and shamans who provide this sacred concoction to participants will usually create a brew with ceremonial-grade cacao and add in powdered, chopped, or whole dried mushrooms. After letting the mushrooms steep for a little while, participants drink the brew and if they want, eat any solid mushrooms that remain in the cup.

Participants may feel the effects coming on stronger than usual, which is common when consuming psilocybin in a brew. The natural fats present in the cacao increase absorption and people may feel like they are able to go deeper into their journey and connect to their heart.

“Cacao is the medicine of the heart and helps us connect with feelings of love, joy, pleasure, playfulness, and creativity,” says Ivaylo Govedarov, a mushroom and cacao ceremony facilitator based in Colombia.

“Mushrooms help us connect with our emotions and body, so when we take them with cacao, in addition to getting the cacao’s superfood benefits, the combination helps us foster that connection with the heart,” he explains.

Combining these ancient medicines in a modern setting requires proper respect for the traditions from which they came. It’s a wise idea to make sure that the facilitator understands the Mesoamerican roots of using cacao and mushrooms ceremonially, sources the substances responsibly, and is engaged in indigenous reciprocity. And as always, any psychedelic facilitator should be properly trained in harm reduction and should deeply understand their responsibility to create a safe container for everyone taking part in the ceremony.



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