

BEGINNER'S GUIDE

CEREMONIAL GRADE CACAO



HERBALCACAO

CEREMONIAL GRADE CACAO & MEDICINAL BLENDS

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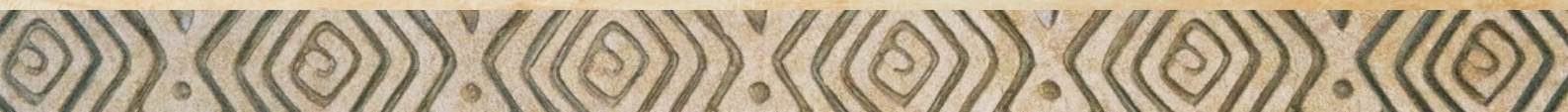
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1. INTRODUCTION

This E-book was created to honour our Indigenous Maya tribes. We celebrate their ancient cacao wisdom that has been used as plant medicine for thousands of years.

Revered as "a gift from the gods," cacao has been traditionally used by the Indigenous Maya, Aztec, Olmec, and Toltec tribes. Native to Mesoamerica for thousands of years, cacao continues to be a powerful healer of the physical, emotional, and spiritual body. With profound awareness, love, and deep respect for the plant spirit "Espiritu Cacao," these communities celebrate Mama cacao. The Maya, in particular, are passionate about sharing and transmitting cacao's remarkable health and spiritual benefits to people worldwide.

Plant medicine is gaining popularity in the Western world as we seek deeper connections in our lives. By using cacao to cultivate a profound inner connection and enhance self-love, we can extend this love to strengthen our bonds with the community.

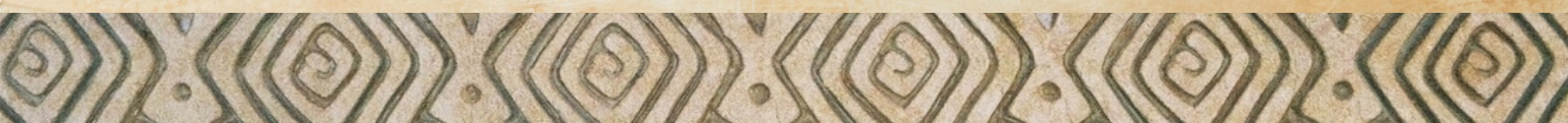
In this e-book, I will guide you through the latest research on the fascinating "food of the gods" and share ancient wisdom passed down by the Indigenous Maya. You will learn how to create a safe ceremonial space and, most importantly, how to cultivate your own relationship with the plant medicine "Espiritu Cacao."

Everyone is unique and beautiful in their own way, and cacao helps us reveal our authenticity and inner beauty.

I hope this e-book serves as a valuable guide, helping you understand the power of ceremonial cacao and teaching you how to share this remarkable plant medicine, as we work together to create a conscious new world of heart-centered living.

BE THE LOVE | SHARE THE LOVE | SPREAD THE LOVE

With love, Sharon





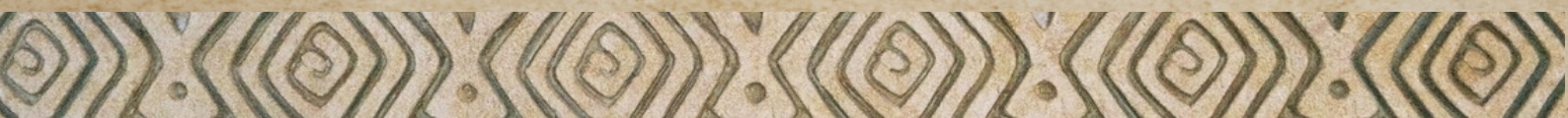
2. ANCIENT HISTORY & USE



As far back as 460 AD, cacao was consumed as a medicinal beverage by Indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica, including the Toltecs, Olmecs, Aztecs, and Maya. Recent evidence from pottery residue found in Honduras* indicates that humans were drinking cacao beverages as early as 600 B.C.

Cacao held immense significance for the Indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica. It was revered as a sacred food with divine origins and believed to be a gift from the gods. Cacao seeds were used as a form of currency, and a yearly festival was held to honor the cacao god Ek Chuah.*

The "Theobroma Cacao Tree" remains sacred to Indigenous communities in the ancient Maya lands. Its scientific name, Theobroma, translates to "food of the gods" (Theo=God, Bromo=Food), reflecting its esteemed status.



The Indigenous Maya believe that true healing occurs when all four bodies—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—are aligned.

This belief is one reason cacao has been integral to many of their rituals and ceremonies. It is used not only to heal the physical body but also to deepen their connection with the spirit world and nature itself.

To prepare their sacred drink they stone-ground cacao beans and mixed the paste with water to create a bitter drink. This was mainly used by

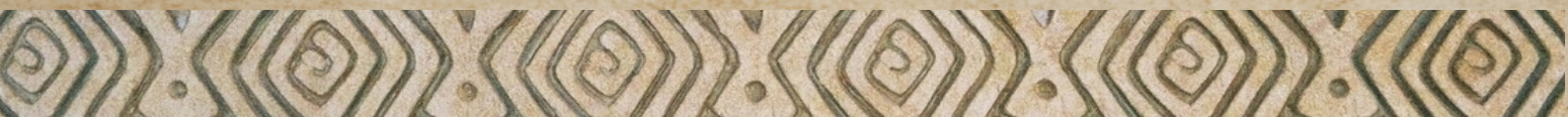


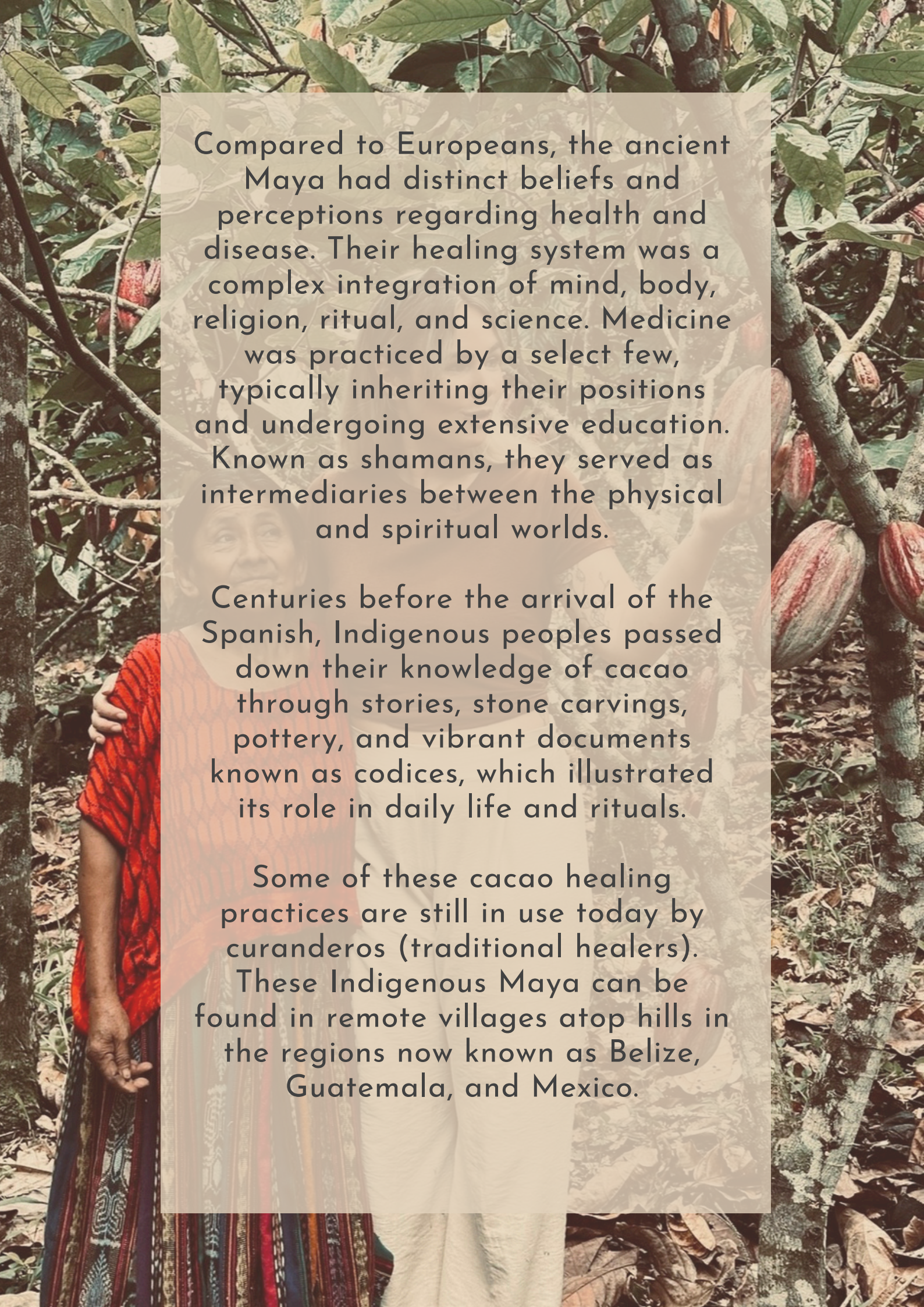
priests, highest government and military officers, distinguished warriors, and even occasionally sacrificial victims.

Additionally, medicine women and men (curanderos) used this sacred cacao drink as a remedy for various illnesses and diseases. Cacao also served as a flavor enhancer and binder for other medicinal drinks.*

They used a traditional tool called a "Mollonillo" to froth the cacao;* this ancient technique is still used today by the indigenous Maya tribes in many of their healing and celebration ceremonies.

Soon after the Spanish inquisition, the medicinal drink was transported and spread throughout Europe. The new world drink was soon referred to as "the cacao health drink" or "medicinal drinking chocolate."





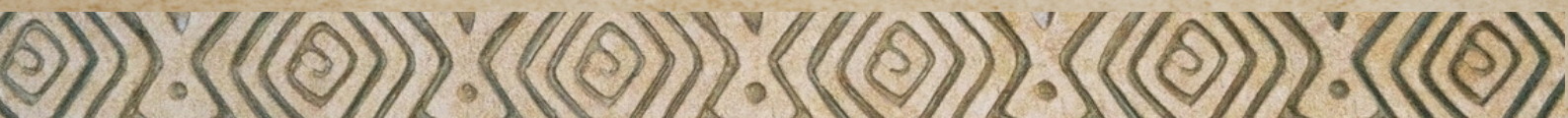
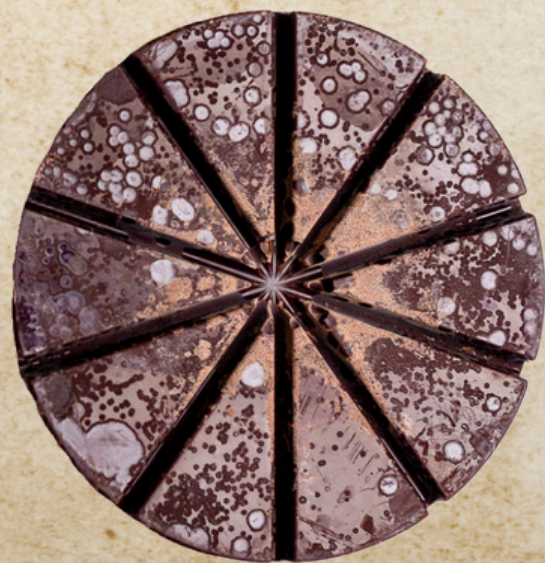
Compared to Europeans, the ancient Maya had distinct beliefs and perceptions regarding health and disease. Their healing system was a complex integration of mind, body, religion, ritual, and science. Medicine was practiced by a select few, typically inheriting their positions and undergoing extensive education. Known as shamans, they served as intermediaries between the physical and spiritual worlds.

Centuries before the arrival of the Spanish, Indigenous peoples passed down their knowledge of cacao through stories, stone carvings, pottery, and vibrant documents known as codices, which illustrated its role in daily life and rituals.

Some of these cacao healing practices are still in use today by curanderos (traditional healers). These Indigenous Maya can be found in remote villages atop hills in the regions now known as Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico.

Unfortunately, as this plant medicine was shared with the Western world, much of its essence was lost. The ancient tradition and respect for cacao were not communicated or passed down, resulting in significant changes to cacao production. Around the time of the Spanish Inquisition, cacao was transformed into a highly processed food, containing additives, sugar, colorings, and preservatives, creating the premium snack for Europe's elite that we now know as chocolate. The indigenous Maya suffered immensely from these changes, making many sacrifices as they continue to fight hard to keep their culture and traditions alive.

Thanks to recent research, cacao is making a comeback and has been praised as "the superfood of all superfoods." Its high nutritional content contributes to numerous health benefits—be they mental, physical, or spiritual. Cacao ceremonies are on the rise, and with them, the respect and honor for the plant spirit are slowly making their way back into our hearts.



3. CACAO VARIETIES & STAGES

A close-up photograph of cacao beans, a cinnamon stick, and a chocolate bar on a white surface. The chocolate bar is round and has been cut into several segments. The background is a light-colored, textured surface.

By the 18th century, a process known as Dutch Alkalizing was introduced in Europe to treat cacao. This method involved removing the fat from the cacao beans and treating them with an alkalizing agent to reduce their natural acidity, resulting in a milder, less bitter taste compared to "natural cacao." The fat was later reintroduced to create chocolate.

The alkalized cacao underwent several days of conching in large industrial machines, followed by a process called tempering to achieve the proper consistency for chocolate. Tempering involves reheating the cacao to high temperatures.

Unfortunately, much of the cacao's healthy components and its intrinsic plant spirit are lost during these industrial processes.

This modern method of making chocolate differs significantly from the way the ancient Maya and Aztecs used cacao. In fact, the word "chocolate" itself is derived from the Aztec term *xocoatl*, which means "bitter water."



There are 3 main varieties of cacao:

Criollo

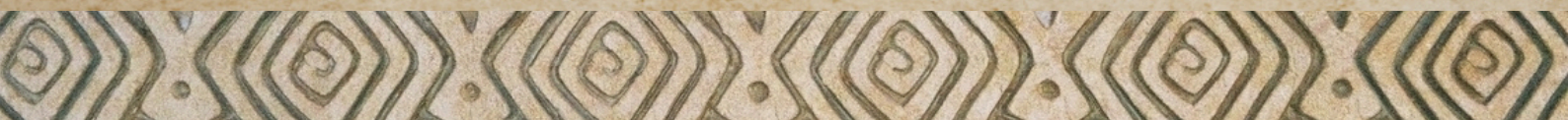
Criollo (or native) represents a high quality, upper Amazonian, pure strain of cacao. Herbal Cacao falls under this variety!

Forastero

Forastero (or foreign) beans, commonly known as bulk cocoa, are the most widely produced variety in the world, accounting for approximately 80-85% of global cacao production. Today, the majority of this bulk cocoa is grown in West Africa.

Trinitario

This name originates from cacao breeding activities in Trinidad and Tobago, where extensive research into cacao genetics, cultivation, and processing was conducted. The term Trinitario refers to a hybrid variety that combines Criollo and Forastero cacao genetics.



CACAO FRUIT / POD:

Natively grown in Meso-America in beautiful colour, ranging from bright yellow, to orange, red, and green. When harvested, the cacao pods are opened with a machete.



CACAO BEANS / SEEDS:

Removed from the fruit and fermented together with the sweet, white pulp.

This process makes the nutritional benefits of the cacao bean available for human consumption.



CACAO HUSK:

After drying the seeds there is a protective layer called the "cacao husk" which preserves the bean. This must be peeled off before using the cacao.





CACAO NIBS
Essentially, broken-up cacao beans. There is a difference between RAW cacao nibs & processed/treated cacao nibs.

CACAO PASTE:
Paste made from ground Cacao beans.
Treated cacao pastes are Dutch Alkalisied/
RAW/roasted.



CACAO POWDER
Typically ground from heat-treated cacao.
Process involves removing the fat from the bean.
Removes much of the nutritional value (found in the fat/butter).



CACAO BUTTER:
By processing the bean the powder gets separated. This highly processed butter is mainly used for beauty products.





Herbal Cacao sources premium, high-vibrational cacao from Indigenous Maya tribes in the Upper Amazon. Native to the Quiche and Mopan tribes of southern Belize, near the Guatemalan border, this sacred cacao grows in the lush Maya Mountain range, rich in biodiversity. The Maya live in perfect harmony with nature, seeking permission from the spirit world before harvesting from their sacred lands.



Ceremonial cacao, or ceremonial-grade cacao, is a unique product distinguished by its 100% pure cacao beans. It boasts a significantly higher concentration of health-restoring and mood-enhancing compounds compared to other cacao products such as cacao powder, non-ceremonial cacao paste, and dark chocolate. This cacao contains over 50% beneficial fat, often referred to as "good fat."

Always research the origins of your ceremonial cacao. Understand which Indigenous tribes harvest this sacred food source, whether the profits are reinvested into the community, and the conditions under which the cacao is grown and harvested. This ensures that the spirit of this ancient, sacred beverage is respected and preserved.



4. PHYSICAL & SPIRITUAL HEALTH BENEFITS

In a holistic approach to health, all aspects of the mind, body, and soul connection are considered.

Ceremonial cacao transcends physical health, opening and nourishing our heart's energy.



- CACAO - THE LOVE DRUG

Yes really!!! Cacao contains LOVE chemicals.

Dr. David Lewis of The Mind Lab discovered that chocolate can provide "a buzz that lasts four times longer than the most passionate kiss."



Cacao stimulates the release of oxytocin, known as the "love hormone," which is naturally produced in the human body when we fall in love!*

Yes, both our bodies and cacao contain this wonderful compound—and there's even more to it! When you consume cacao, it prompts your brain to release additional "feel-good" chemicals unique to cacao. No other food source combines these beneficial compounds quite like cacao does.

Even science refers to cacao as "The Love Drug." When you consume raw cacao, it releases several neurotransmitters that positively affect your emotions. Cacao enhances brain chemistry associated with feelings of being in love.*

PEA (PHENETHYLAMINE)

The "love chemical" helps trigger the release of endorphins, the body's natural pleasure compounds. Additionally, PEA enhances dopamine activity, a neurochemical directly linked to **pleasure**, evoking feelings akin to being in **love**.*

THEOBROMINE

A bitter alkaloid named after the cacao plant - Theobroma. It is a stimulant that improves focus, concentration, and visual processing of information. It can make you feel calm, alert, and at ease. Theobromine helps to dilate blood vessels by 10-20%, increasing oxygen flow to all the cells in your body.*

ANANDAMIDE

Taken from the Sanskrit word for "bliss, happiness, pleasure, joy, and delight." Scientists call this chemical the "bliss molecule" because it helps promote feelings of pleasure and wellbeing.*



TRYPTOPHAN

Is converted in the human body into serotonin, known as the **happy hormone**.

It is also a precursor to melatonin, which **improves sleep** and helps you better manage stress.

Since tryptophan is highly sensitive to heat, it is recommended not to heat cacao to preserve its beneficial properties.*

SEROTONIN

Serotonin, often called the "**happiness hormone**," is the same pleasure chemical released by the body after consuming carbohydrates. It is a crucial neurotransmitter in the human brain and is found in cacao.

Additionally, cacao contains substances like tryptophan that are essential for the body's production and stimulation of serotonin.*

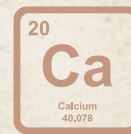
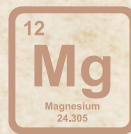
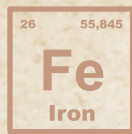
Serotonin naturally fosters a sense of **calm** and **well-being**, enhancing mood and promoting a **positive outlook**.*



- MAGNESIUM -

Cacao is one of the highest plant-based sources of magnesium in the world.

This micronutrient is crucial for overall health and supports over 300 detoxification processes in the body. Despite its importance, magnesium is one of the most depleted minerals in Western societies. Essential for a healthy heart, magnesium is found in concentrations 18 times higher in the heart than in the bloodstream. It also aids in converting glucose into energy, which helps your brain maintain sharp clarity and focus. Additionally, magnesium reduces pain sensitivity, calms the nerves, and alleviates menstrual cramps due to its muscle-relaxing properties.*



- IRON -

Cacao is the highest plant-based source of iron, delivering an impressive 7.3 mg per 100 grams. In comparison, beef and lamb provide 2.5 mg, while spinach offers 3.6 mg.*

- CALCIUM -

Cacao contains more calcium than cow's milk, providing 160 mg per 100 grams compared to just 125 mg per 100 milliliters of milk.*

Cacao also contains important trace elements like chromium, which helps regulate blood sugar levels, and zinc, which supports growth, insulin storage, protein synthesis, and sperm production. Additionally, zinc plays a crucial role in strengthening the immune system.



ANTI-OXODANTS

Cacao is rich in antioxidants, particularly flavonoids such as epicatechin and catechin. These polyphenol antioxidants have been extensively studied and shown to enhance cognitive performance.*

Ceremonial cacao boasts over 40 times the antioxidants of blueberries and an impressive ORAC score of 98,000 per 100 grams compared to blueberries' 2,400. The ORAC score measures an antioxidant's ability to neutralize free radicals.*

Numerous studies have demonstrated that these flavonols enhance blood flow to the brain. By improving blood circulation and increasing oxygen delivery to the brain, cacao boosts mental focus and attention span, making it an ideal brain food.*

CACAO VS COFFEE

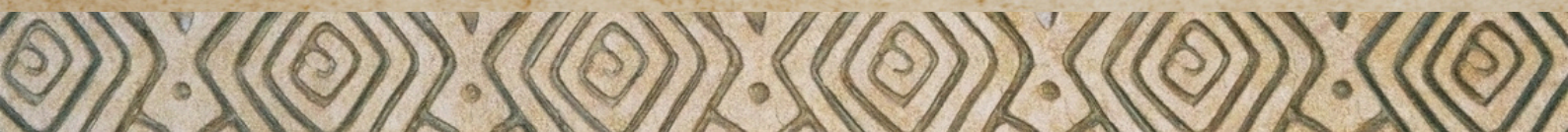
Thinking to switch your daily coffee with a cup of high vibrational cacao? Do it!!!

Cacao contains over 50% healthy fats, which facilitate the absorption of its vital nutrients. These good fats help regulate carbohydrate metabolism in the bloodstream, providing a steady and stable source of energy. Unlike coffee, which can cause a spike followed by a crash and potential headaches, cacao offers a more balanced and sustained energy boost.*



The stimulating effect of ceremonial cacao is primarily due to its theobromine content, which belongs to the same family as caffeine. While cacao does contain caffeine, it's present in only trace amounts (0.04%). Compared to caffeine, theobromine provides a longer-lasting, milder, and more pleasant energy boost. Theobromine also contributes to lower blood pressure by improving blood flow and acts as a smooth muscle relaxant, including in the lungs, allowing for deeper breathing. Despite its stimulating properties, theobromine can enhance sleep quality by balancing brain chemistry, which in turn improves focus and attention.*

In addition to these benefits, cacao offers all the previously mentioned health advantages and "love chemicals."



The spiritual dimension of Cacao is described as medicine of the soul.



Cacao opens your heart's energy centre known as the heart chakra.

Cacao is revered as a keeper of ancient, sacred wisdom and a gateway to the inner spirit and higher self.

For many Indigenous peoples, the Cacao Spirit is seen as a feminine force, deeply connected with the emotional body, voice, and communication with the spirit realm. Known as "Espiritu Cacao" or "Mama Cacao," she embodies the vibrations of kindness, unconditional love, and joy, fostering a profound and loving connection with oneself and others.



5. BUILDING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDICINE

Cacao is subtle, non-psychedelic plant medicine that gently opens our heart's energy, deepening the love within us.

By opening your heart and inviting her presence, cacao will embrace you with a warm, gentle hug, welcoming you into a space of profound connection and affection.

CACAO SPEAKS TO THOSE
WHO WILL LISTEN



OPEN YOUR HEART



Unlike potent psychoactive and psychedelic plant medicines such as Ayahuasca, cacao is subtle in its effects. When we open our hearts to her, she offers a loving and nurturing energy. Cacao helps us connect with our higher selves, receive insights, and guidance—but only if we are open to receiving her gentle influence.



Allow the plant spirit to speak to your heart by honouring cacao's energy; use ceremony to embark on a motherly, gentle healing process.

Offer a prayer of gratitude to the lands from which this plant medicine originates, acknowledging that cacao holds the memory and energy of all that has occurred on these sacred lands.



It's natural to feel unsure or even a bit apprehensive when working with cacao. While this e-book provides guidance and tools to help you navigate your experience, your relationship with the plant medicine is deeply personal.

You have the freedom to shape and cultivate this connection in whatever way feels right for you.



There is no right or wrong way to use Ceremonial Cacao. However, here are some tips and tricks to consider as you create or facilitate your own Cacao Ceremonies.

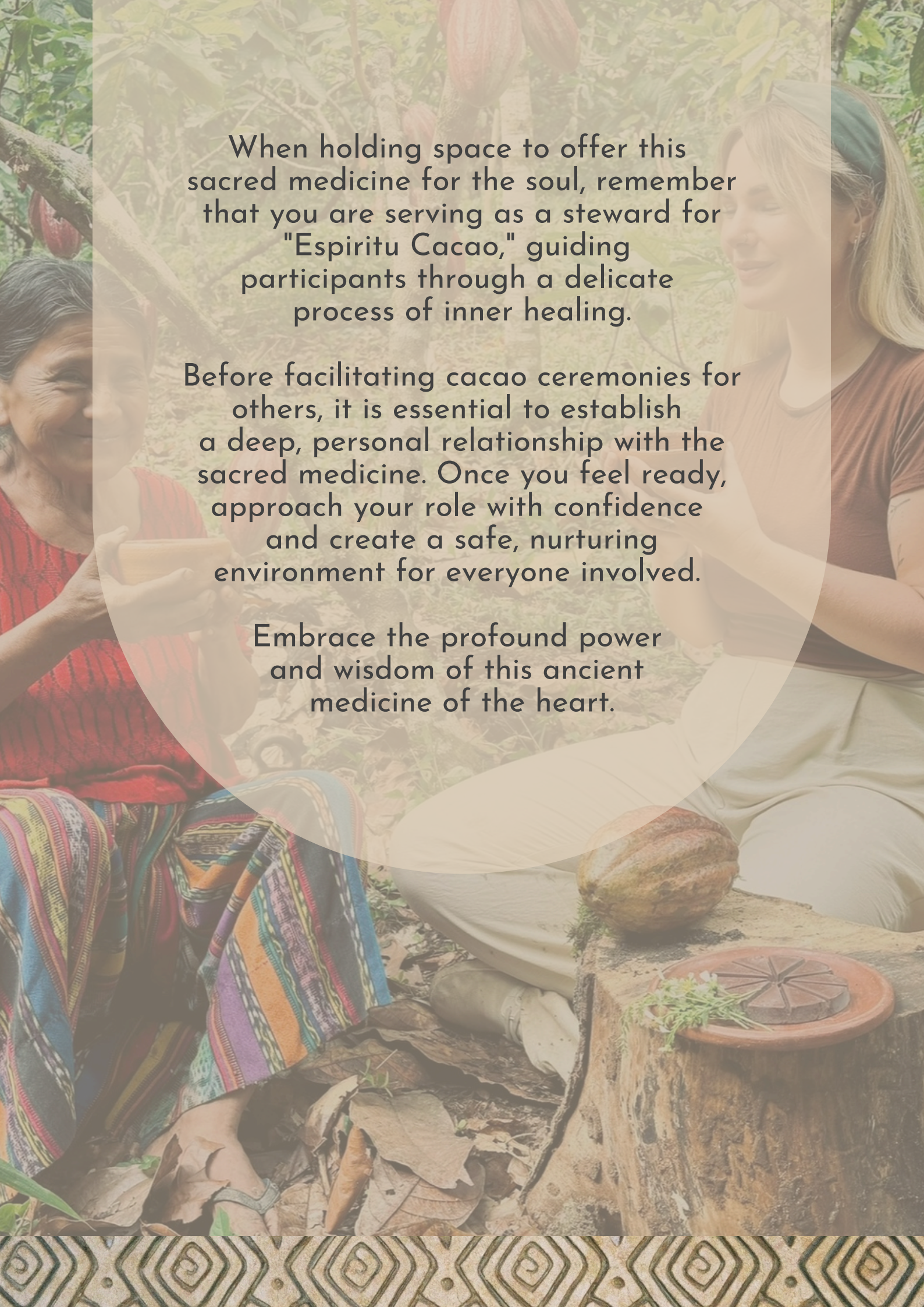


Cacao is a sacred beverage that must be handled with respect and reverence, honoring the traditional Indigenous ceremonies and rituals.

In traditional Mayan ceremonies, an Aj'qil, a revered Mayan elder, leads the sacred rites. An Aj'qil, also known as a Tata, has dedicated much of his life to this path and holds deep respect within the community. It is important to recognize that only those of this lineage should conduct a traditional ancestral practice, such as a Sacred Cacao Ceremony.

In most, if not all, Maya ceremonies, fire plays a central role in the sacred traditions. Cacao is always offered first to the fire spirit, seeking permission and blessings. Fire provides the strength to release what no longer serves us and holds the power to assist in our transformation.





When holding space to offer this sacred medicine for the soul, remember that you are serving as a steward for "Espiritu Cacao," guiding participants through a delicate process of inner healing.

Before facilitating cacao ceremonies for others, it is essential to establish a deep, personal relationship with the sacred medicine. Once you feel ready, approach your role with confidence and create a safe, nurturing environment for everyone involved.

Embrace the profound power and wisdom of this ancient medicine of the heart.

DOSAGE

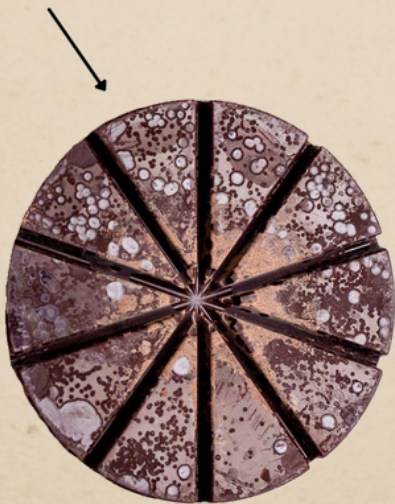


The effects of cacao can vary for each individual. Finding the right dosage for yourself depends on several factors, including your sensitivity to plant medicine, height, body weight, and gender. Each of these elements can influence how cacao affects you.

Low doses of 10-20 grams are usually taken as a replacement for coffee or as a nutritional supplement.

High doses or Ceremonial doses range from 30-50 grams.

1 PIECE = 10 GRAM



Herbal Cacao offers 100 gram discs divided into 10 pieces (10 grams each), allowing you to easily find your ideal dosage. We offer cacao both in its natural form, or expertly blended with potent herbs and spices.





SAFTEY

Ceremonial cacao is highly detoxifying, which of course is beneficial! However, it is crucial to drink plenty of water to help flush these toxins from your body.

While cacao is generally not recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women due to its stimulating effects, small and controlled doses may offer nutritional benefits. Traditionally, the Indigenous Maya even provide a full cup of cacao to new mothers, viewing it as a source of strength, life force, and love.





Cacao contains compounds that inhibit the enzyme monoamine oxidase (MAO), similar to those found in many psychedelic plants. This inhibition can enhance the effects of certain psychedelic substances, such as DMT..

MAO is responsible for breaking down several neurotransmitters, including serotonin and dopamine. By inhibiting MAO, cacao increases the levels of these mood-enhancing chemicals in the brain, leading to feelings of happiness and a positive mood. Thus, cacao can be considered a natural mood enhancer.*

Synthetic MAO inhibitors are commonly used as antidepressants. However, taking them in high concentrations can lead to side effects, including potentially severe conditions like cardiotoxic and neurotoxic serotonin syndrome.*

Therefore, ceremonial cacao should not be combined with antidepressants or other MAO inhibitor-containing substances, such as ayahuasca.

6. PREPARING YOUR CACAO

1

Choose your dosage. Break off your preferred amount for either your individual dose, or for your group.

Add your liquid. Use either warm water or plant based milk.

Tip 1: Do not boil as you might lose nutrients.

Tip 2: Do not use cow's milk as it might block the absorption of minerals.

2

3

Slowly whisk in a sauce pan, until everything is melted.

Tip: This is the best time to set your intention and whisk it through your cacao.


Our cacao is unsweetened and, in most blends from Herbal Cacao, is already infused with potent spices for enhanced health and spiritual benefits. You are welcome to add your choice of sweeteners or additional herbs.

7. SETTING UP YOUR PRIVATE CEREMONY




SETTING

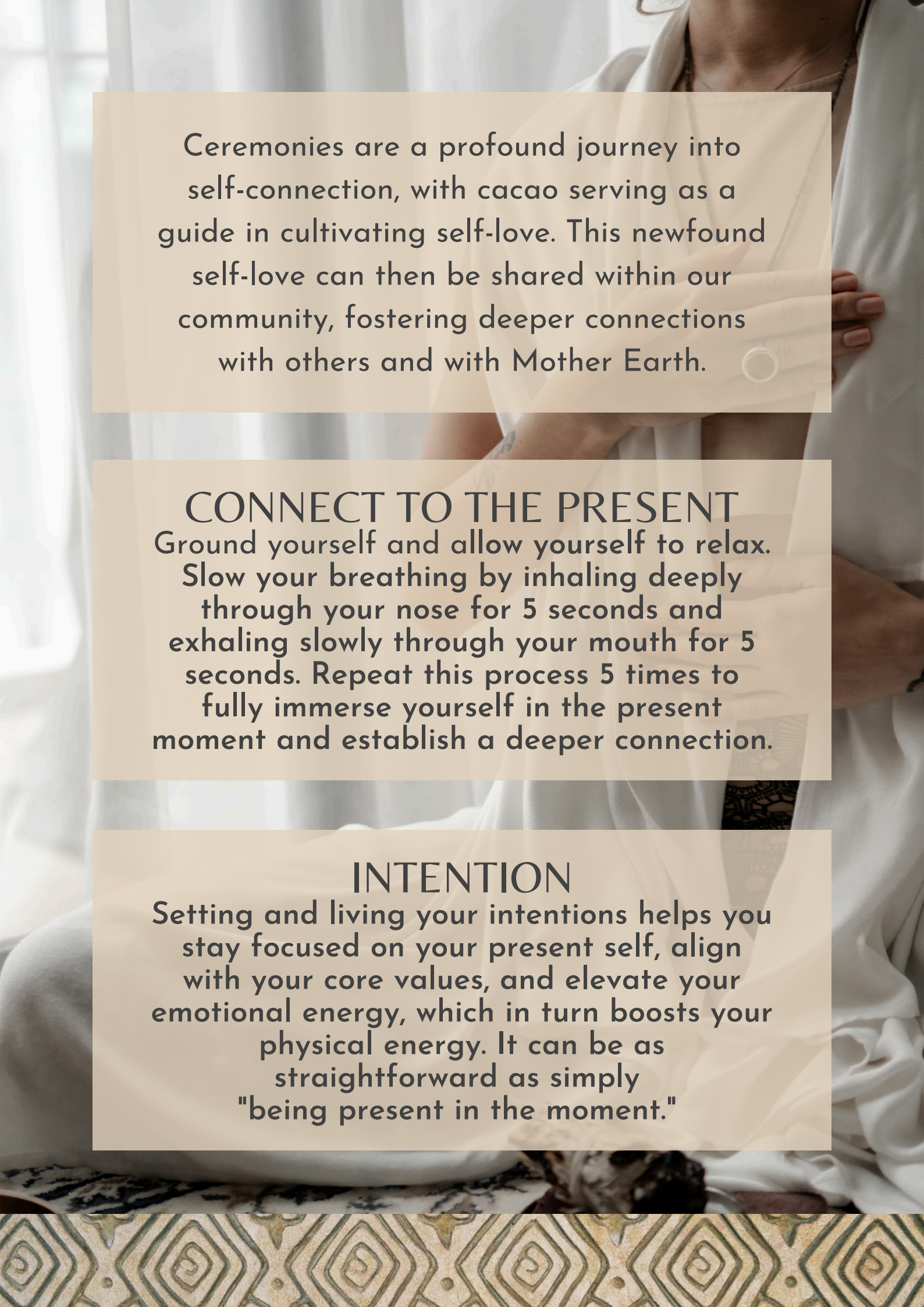
There are no strict rules for your setting, but it is crucial that you feel comfortable and safe where you hold your ceremony. Ideally, choose a space where you won't be disturbed to ensure a peaceful and focused experience.



You can cleanse your ceremonial space by smudging with ancient herbs that help dispel negative energies. The Maya traditionally used Copal for this purpose, but other popular options include Palo Santo, incense sticks, and Sage.

Create a space where you feel completely relaxed by lighting candles and arranging blankets and pillows. Play soothing music that helps you unwind and connect with your inner self.





Ceremonies are a profound journey into self-connection, with cacao serving as a guide in cultivating self-love. This newfound self-love can then be shared within our community, fostering deeper connections with others and with Mother Earth.

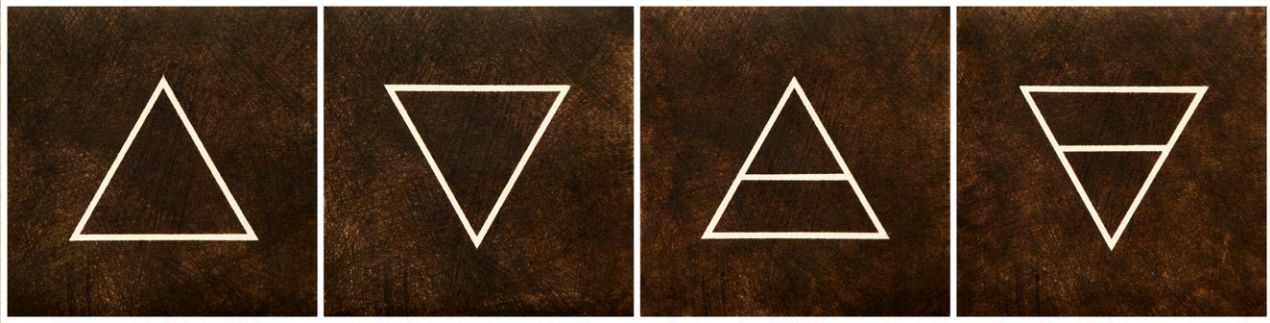
CONNECT TO THE PRESENT

Ground yourself and allow yourself to relax. Slow your breathing by inhaling deeply through your nose for 5 seconds and exhaling slowly through your mouth for 5 seconds. Repeat this process 5 times to fully immerse yourself in the present moment and establish a deeper connection.

INTENTION

Setting and living your intentions helps you stay focused on your present self, align with your core values, and elevate your emotional energy, which in turn boosts your physical energy. It can be as straightforward as simply "being present in the moment."

HONOURING THE 4 ELEMENTS



Fire element:

Represents the creative spark of life, the energy force of possibility, intuition, wisdom, and knowledge.

Water element:

Represents emotions, feelings, and the prana (life force) that runs up and down our bodies..



Earth element:

Represents the basic building blocks of life - Mother Earth.



Air element:

Represents our connection to the universal life force, our breath, communication, thinking, analyzing, inspiration, and connection.



JOURNAL

MEDITATE

MUSIC

VISUALIZE / FANTASIZE

SOUND HEALING

LAUGH

FEEL

TANTRA

SING

BREATHWORK

CRY

DANCE

YOGA

CREATE

ART

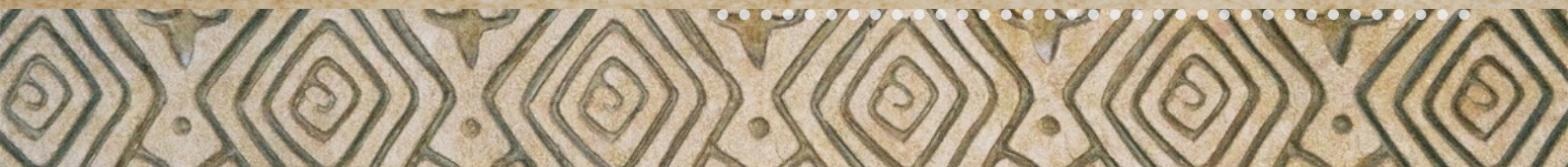
CONSCIOUS ACTIVITIES



SHARING & COMMUNITY

By sharing from the heart with authenticity, you allow yourself to be fully you. Doing this within a safe, supportive, and loving environment fosters a genuine sense of belonging and a shared sense of purpose.

From this understanding, we've created a free online community where we come together with the sacred plant medicine of cacao. Our goal is to open our hearts, embrace our uniqueness, and live fully aligned with our heart's desires.



Community is the beating heart of Herbal Cacao

We envision a world where we honor the sources from which we take and give back with gratitude, considering all aspects of mind, body, and soul.

Each of us has unique gifts to offer, and together, we can create immense beauty in the world.

BE THE LOVE | SHARE THE LOVE | SPREAD THE LOVE



Join our **FREE** online Herbal Cacao Community


In this space, we connect and exchange inspiration and experiences centered around ceremonial cacao.

+

Each month, we come together in our online Cacao Circles to deepen our connection with the plant medicine and with one another.

Herbal Cacao is crafted with a deep passion to share the nourishing and healing powers of sacred cacao, medicinal mushrooms, and adaptogenic herbs.

Our cacao is designed to support your healthy, conscious lifestyle while also enhancing your spiritual journey.



"I want you to become the best version of yourself in every aspect—mentally, physically, and spiritually"

- Sharon Fernie
Founder Herbal Cacao



CEREMONIAL CACAO MEDICINAL BLENDS FOR DAILY RITUAL



“NATURAL”

100% Pure, Premium, Organic, High Vibrational, Ceremonial Grade Cacao - straight from the ancient Maya lands.



“SIGNATURE BLEND”

100% Pure, Premium, Organic, High Vibrational, Ceremonial Grade Cacao - straight from the ancient Maya lands. Infused with Traditional Maya Spices.



“BRAIN POWER”

100% Pure, Premium, Organic, High Vibrational, Ceremonial Grade Cacao - straight from the ancient Maya lands. Infused with LION'S MANE & Traditional Maya Spices.

BE THE LOVE | SHARE THE LOVE | SPREAD THE LOVE



“IMMUNE SUPPORT”

100% Pure, Premium, Organic, High Vibrational, Ceremonial Grade Cacao - straight from the ancient Maya lands. Infused with CHAGA & Traditional Maya Spices.



“PASION”

100% Pure, Premium, Organic, High Vibrational, Ceremonial Grade Cacao - straight from the ancient Maya lands. Infused with MUCUNA PRURIENS, Vanilla & Rose.



HERBAL CACAO

CEREMONIAL GRADE CACAO & MEDICINAL BLENDS

WWW.HERBALCACAO.COM

POWERFUL CEREMONIAL CACAO BLENDS WITH LOVING ENERGY

100% Pure Premium High Vibrational Ceremonial Cacao
from indigenous Maya tribes in the remote villages of
southern Belize and Guatemala.

Available in 5 different medicinal blends



HERBAL CACAO
CEREMONIAL GRADE CACAO & MEDICINAL BLENDS

WWW.HERBALCACAO.COM

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