



A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO...

Ceremonial Cacao



SELENO HEALTH



Welcome!

Welcome to your Beginners Guide to Ceremonial Cacao! This is a tool you can use to develop your knowledge surrounding ceremonial cacao; the rich history, the traditions, the biochemistry, the art of ceremony, and all of the magic in between. Whether you'd like to gain this knowledge for yourself, or for the purpose of sharing cacao in ceremony, all you need is an open mind to start. Thank you for being here.



SELENO HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

Get to know us and our "why", for sharing the magic of cacao.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Dive into the 7,500 year old history of the humble cacao bean.



WHAT IS CEREMONIAL CACAO?

Learn the key qualities of "ceremonial" cacao.



THE SCIENCE

Cacao is so much more than chocolate; it is medicine backed by scientific research.

THE ART OF CEREMONY

Learn the basics of running an authentic cacao ceremony!



How to get the most out of this guide...

When it comes to plant medicine, the greatest knowledge comes from opening yourself to the wisdom of the plant, connecting with it and learning its qualities, as well as understanding the ancient traditions and wisdom surrounding its uses.

Cacao speaks to us all in different ways. The most important tool you can cultivate is to learn to listen. If you wish to share cacao with your community, experience will be your greatest teacher. It is only when we have been deeply touched by the healing power of cacao that we can share from a place of heartfelt knowledge and meet each other in compassion.

In this ebook we have done our very best to provide you with an abundance of tools and techniques that will get you started on the path and give you the confidence to start working with this incredible plant ally today!

Questions?

INFO@SELENOHEALTH.COM

WWW.SELENOHEALTH.COM

[@SELENO.HEALTH](https://www.instagram.com/SELENO.HEALTH)

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Seleno Health cacao, also known as Rescue Cacao, was born out of our mission to rescue the ancient traditions of cacao and the farmers and communities that now produce it.

Our cacao is produced farm to table, cultivated surrounded by native jungle the way it has been done for thousands of years. Hand-picked, blessed in ceremony with reverence and supported with ancestral knowledge, education and ancient tools for you to better connect with its medicine.

For those wanting connection, to be present, to feel embodied, to be balanced, happy and healthy we offer our pure ceremonial cacao direct to you to awaken your heart space. It is our hope that this ebook will provide you with the knowledge and tools you need to begin this journey and develop your own unique relationship with cacao honouring the tribes and traditions of South & Central America.

We believe one of cacao's greatest gifts lies in her ability to bring people together and connect us to a place of love and compassion, no matter who we are or where we come from. Cacao is a gentle guide that reminds us of our indistinguishable connection to each-other, our ancestors, and all of nature. It is this remembrance, that will allow our species to truly thrive and flourish.





CHAPTER TWO

A Brief History

We have all connected with cacao at some point in our lives, as everyone has surely eaten chocolate. But cacao is much more than just chocolate... it has a history dating back 7,500 years as a sacred ceremonial plant medicine. It is our honour to share it with you in deepest reverence for its journey.



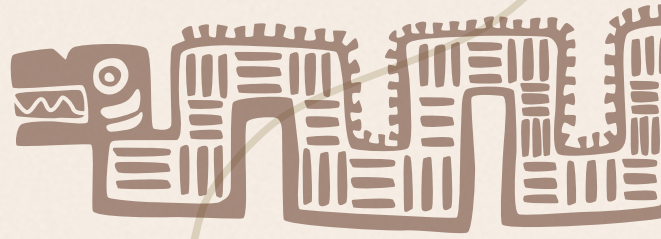
A Brief History...

Cacao trees originated in the Amazon basin of South America. The first ritual use of cacao dates back to the Chinchipe tribe of Peru, 7,500 years ago. Later, the Chavin tribe of Central Peru were found to use cacao; often combined with san pedro (huachuma) as an initiation rite into shamanism. Cacao was spread throughout Central America by various Mesoamerican civilisations, including the Olmecs, Mayans and the Aztecs. Cacao beans were regarded as a sacred and valuable commodity and used for trades and tribute to Aztecs kings.

Cacao was traditionally made into a drink to be consumed by nobility or as part of shamanic or religious cacao ceremonies. The Awajun tribe of Jaen in Peru, are a community that still hold traditional cacao ceremonies today. Like many other medicinal plants, the power of cacao was widely known and utilised not only for ritual and healing but for royalty, indulgence and celebration.

Cacao trees have now been domesticated and spread throughout the world, with the most growth concentrated in a region called the "cacao belt," which is anywhere within 20 degrees north or south of the Equator, such as North Africa and the Pacific Islands.

Cacao remains a vital medicine we need to connect to ourselves, our ancestors, and the universe we inhabit.



The origin of Peru

Recent archaeological evidence has suggested that cacao was being consumed as part of traditional ceremonies by ancient Peruvian civilisations such as the Chinchipe tribe as early as 7,500 years ago. Cacao was found as part of an archaeological investigation of the Montegrande temple in Jaén, Peru. It has been suggested that tribes would gather in this spiral temple and drink cacao to connect with their ancestors and the divinity as a spiritual practice. The spiral shape itself is considered to represent the non-linear nature of time and connection to the 'Ukhu Pacha' - the ancestral world of the Andean cosmivision. The temple also depicts an image of a women giving birth through the spiral. For the Chinchipe people cacao was a sacred seed that in brews represented blood and the concept of re-birth, enabling a deeper connection to ancestry and to self identity. We honour the Chinchipe with our Amaru ceremonial cacao



To Central America

The first domestication of cacao likely occurred in this area of South America by the native people before being carried on foot to Central America. The Mayans were possibly the first to write about cacao in the form of hieroglyphs and pictures, found in their tombs and on the vessels to contain their liquid cacao. One such vessel, dating back to 460-480 A.D., from a Mayan tomb in Río Azul, northeastern Guatemala, possesses the characters that translate to the Olmec and Mayan word, "ka ka wa," or cacao. This word is a combination of the words meaning "man" and "woman," referring to how cacao ceremonies represented the unification of man and woman to create life (re-birth). Ceremonies also depicted this through the use of special tools; the jicara (the vessel), and the molinillo.

Chavín de Huántar, rituals and cosmivision

Tracing back the origins of cacao to Peru, we are able to also see evidence of its use at the Chavín de Huántar temple which was constructed around 1200 BC and formed the pre-Incan Chavin culture. The temple was a central hub for indigenous tribes. Here, cacao was served ceremonially with other plant medicine such as San Pedro to initiate shamans. Throughout the temple, depictions of the Jaguar can be widely found. In Chavin cosmivision, the Uturunku (jaguar) represents a protector, a guardian of cacao, and a being that creates harmony and balance in the Amazon, often depicted as sitting in the cacao tree. We honour Chavin with our Uturunku ceremonial cacao.

The Uturunku represents the 'Kay Pacha', (the world of the here and now) and reminds us that we are not separate from the natural world. It can also access the Hanan Pacha (world above - spiritual world) and Ukhu Pacha (inner world - ancestral world) through the master plant cacao.

The spiral, as seen in the Montegrade Temple is represented synonymously with the Amaru (serpent) of the Andean cosmivision, or the 'Ukhu Pacha'. This is symbolic of our connection to our ancestors, instinctual behaviour, and the reptilian brain. Ukhu Pacha represents reverence for the past and those who lived before us. Subsequently, the Kay Pacha represents the here and now, the embodied state, contemplation, inwards regression and the limbic aspects of our brain. While the third realm of the trilogy, the 'Hanan Pacha' represents our spiritual connection to ourselves and the cosmos. It harnesses the concept of wisdom and transcendence.

Honouring these traditions, we can traverse the 3 worlds through the ceremonial use of cacao...



The Journey to Chocolate...

During the 16th century, following the arrival of the Spanish invaders, cargoes of cacao beans were exported to Europe. By the end of the 17th century, cacao had spread throughout Europe and further with more people enjoying cacao beverages, typically sweetened with sugar and used in milk based products.

With the popularity of sweetened cacao drinks in Europe came the development of new cacao-processing methods and new cacao-based products. Coenrad Johannes Van Houten developed Dutch pressed cocoa powder by 1928, which was eventually used by Joseph S. Fry to create the first commercial chocolate bar. Other recipes and processes were developed, such as the addition of milk powder for Cadbury's milk chocolate or the process of "conching" for the smooth textured chocolates made by Lindt. With the growing demand worldwide for chocolate production increased in Central and South America, and people began to establish cacao plantations in other tropical places, such as Ghana, São Tome and Principe, and even South East Asia. Africa became the largest exporter of cacao beans by the 1920s and remains one of the largest exporters today. However, Latin American producers of cacao have managed to maintain their place in the market and still produce most of the world's finer quality Criollo cacao.

The journey of domesticated cacao has been over 7,500 years in the making, with it now reaching every household on the planet and becoming one of the most commonly consumed commodities in the form of chocolate. While cacao is best known in the Western world as a source for confectionary, raw cacao used correctly is still a sacred medicine that possesses vast physical and spiritual benefits. Its true roots still lie in the South and Central regions of the Americas with the indigenous descendants of the original cultivators - a history, traditions and cultural practices that we believe should be protected and rescued.

Molinillo

A molinillo, is a specialised whisk that can introduce air into the cacao elixir. The molinillo represents the masculine energy (phallus), and is used to balance the forces and elements in the preparation of a ceremonial cacao drink. The process of whisking the cacao in an jicara (vessel); seen as a feminine energy, to emulsify the fat, create foaming (air element or breath of life) and combine the two energies, represents the creation of life or re-birth. The use of this tool is also a beautiful opportunity to infuse an intention or prayer into your cacao. Singing or chanting while whisking is encouraged.



Jicara

The cacao vessel, also known as a jicara, represents the feminine energy. It represents the womb that holds the blood of nature (cacao), holding the energy of transformation. The Spirit of Cacao is often referred to in the feminine; whose medicine is often described as gentle and nurturing, yet powerful and potent. Using the jicara to whisk cacao and share in ceremony is a powerful reminder of the sacred feminine and holder of life.

Metate

The metate can be called a quern, milling stone or grinding stone, similar to a mortar and pestle. It is one of the oldest domestic tools in the Americas - as old as the domestication of corn, around 7000 BC. Traditionally it is used by women, who kneel on the ground when using it. Metates have always been made with 3 small legs. This corresponds with the 3 worlds of the Andean cosmovision; the Ukhu Pacha, the Kay Pacha, and the Hanan Pacha, also the sun, moon and earth. Cacao beans are traditionally cracked and milled on the metate to produce a liquor for paste. The metate also represents the earth element as it is made from volcanic stone.



Energetics of the 5

Elements

Cacao embodies the wisdom of all of the elements. The beans are roasted on the element of fire, ground using the metate made of volcanic stone, embodying the element of Earth. The Jicara is also cleansed using the element of fire. The cacao is then combined with the element of water to make a ceremonial elixir, emulsified with the element of air by the use of the molinillo. Infusing an intention into the cacao elixir, embodies the element of ether, the energy of pure potential, spirit into matter.

CHAPTER THREE



“Ceremonial” Cacao ~ what is it?

All cacao comes from *Theobroma Cacao*, a small evergreen tree native to the deep tropical regions of Mesoamerica. However - not all cacao is equal, as there are many different varieties, qualities and therapeutic properties of cacao. Just like wine, cacao also has different grades and calibers that differentiate normal cacao to ceremonial cacao. To be considered ceremonial grade cacao it must tick all the boxes outlined below....

Purity

Ceremonial cacao is pure full cacao-bean paste – the cacao paste block (or drops) must be prepared from only 100% pure organic cacao beans that have been naturally sun-dried, hand-peeled and milled to form the paste. Nothing added, nothing removed. It is cacao in its purest form beautifully blended in its own full-fat to produce a creamy 100% pure cacao liquor.



Quality

Our farmers carefully hand-select each pod to be used in ceremonial production. Pods and beans are selected by their shape, maturity, colour, aroma and size to ensure the paste is the best quality. The criollo variety, found in our Amaru paste; is a rare, premium cacao variety of cacao known for its incredibly aromatic flavour, and containing the highest levels of medicinal components. The native variety found in our Uturunku paste, is extremely rare that grows naturally in the Amazon, with very unique qualities... it's never been seen before! Both varieties are very delicate, low yielding and require careful attention and support from the jungle canopy to thrive. These varieties are not used for mass production as they cannot produce on a large scale, so they are reserved for sacred use!

Natural

It is 100% organic shade-grown under a natural agroforestry canopy – cacao pods are porous and they absorb the aromas and energies of the plants that surround them. Neighbouring trees containing fruits like banana or papaya have the ability to infuse the flavour of the cacao and enhance the profile and sensory experience when using it in ceremony. True ceremonial cacao comes from this agroforestry environment and the cacao produced not only contains the flavours of the jungle that surround it but also the energy and vibration of the environment, further enhancing the spiritual connection of the user to the Amazonian spirit.



Reverance - History

To be truly classified as ceremonial the cacao paste needs to come from South or Central America, from a lineage of traditional use. Cacao from other areas of the world is considered cacao paste but not 'ceremonial cacao'. It has to be blessed by the indigenous owners of the land and produced with respect to their traditional customs. All ceremonial cacao comes from indigenous communities where the people have used it ceremonially for thousands of years as a sacred plant medicine. It is essential that the ancestral owners of the cacao are involved in the production process including blessing the soil, trees, pods and paste throughout the process and that reverence is upheld towards the culturally sensitive aspects of the people from the farming community. The cacao ceremony starts when the seeds are planted. Happy trees, happy farmers and a happy community provides clean pure happy, high-vibrational cacao.





CHAPTER FOUR

The Science

The humble cacao bean has enriched our lives and our taste buds for thousands of years. Science is now confirming what the Indigenous people of South & Central America have known for centuries: cacao is powerful medicine. Cacao is a powerhouse of minerals that are essential for our health and well-being and support the normal function of our brain, heart, lungs, immune system, muscles, and more.





Biochemistry of Cacao

All our cacao is therapeutically profiled based on biochemical analysis to create sensation and therapeutic profiles, so you can target the cacao to the treatment or experience. Science has shown us that not all cacao is equal.

Cacao contains many bioactive compounds and essential minerals that work together to support immune and cardiovascular health, enhance cognitive function, elevate mood, and improve nutritional health. *Theobroma Cacao* is cacao's botanical name...a name that literally translates to *Food of the Gods* in Greek, highlighting its reverence among many cultures.

Theo - God **Broma - Food**

This name refers to its main active constituent, *Theobromine*. A gentle stimulant and vasodilator, it brings blood to the skin, to the heart, to the brain, and creates a feeling of expansion ~ a feeling that has been revered as sacred throughout history. While it also interacts with adenosine receptors throughout the body to produce an uplifting effect, studies have shown that theobromine can also reduce blood pressure in people with elevated blood pressure.

Flavanols in cacao possess antioxidant properties to reduce oxidative stress and protect our cells. Cacao flavanols can lead to improved immune function, increased mental clarity, enhanced vitality, reduced risk of developing cardiovascular disease, and improved antioxidant activity to improve skin health and slow ageing.

Cacao also contains the essential amino acid, *tryptophan*, and its related metabolite, *tryptamine*. Tryptophan is one of the nine essential amino acids that humans require to sustain life, that acts as a precursor to vitamin B3, melatonin, and serotonin. Tryptamine has the ability to ignite receptors in the 5-HT_{2a} pathway. This is also the same pathway in which the traditional spiritual medicine Ayahuasca and San Pedro act. By acting as precursors for our natural neurotransmitters or directly activating serotonin pathways, tryptophan and tryptamine can influence the body to improve mood, cognitive function, memory and learning, sleep and dreams, and more.



Biochemistry of Cacao

Cacao contains compounds called N-acylethanolamines (NAEs), which are similar to our bodies own natural anandamide endocannabinoid, named after the Sanskrit word, ananda, meaning “bliss,” as it is known to induce a feeling of euphoria when released. Endocannabinoids are natural regulatory molecules that keep the body in balance. NAEs in cacao have been found to lengthen the function of natural anandamide and provide numerous health benefits. They have been found to be anti-inflammatory, provide natural pain relief, and even aid weight loss by promoting the use of stored fat for energy. Altogether, this can help mediate our stress and hormone responses to boost energy levels and metabolism, enhance cognitive function, improve mood, reduce chronic pain, and support immunity.

Phenylethylamine (PEA) is another important compound found in cacao that can regulate neurotransmitter release in the brain. PEA can exert similar effects to dopamine, and may up-regulate the release of dopamine by inhibiting dopamine depletion and enhancing its effects. There are several important dopaminergic pathways that play important roles in feelings of pleasure and rewards, and PEA is thus able to elevate those feelings through our natural pathways. PEA is primarily involved in influencing mood to elevate feelings of happiness and satisfaction, enhance attention span, and even relieve feelings of anxiety and depression.

Cacao contains several essential minerals, including magnesium, calcium, zinc, phosphorus, and iron. Zinc is required for healthy brain signalling, cognitive function and sleep. Iron is an important component of our blood and transport of oxygen around the body. Magnesium is a mineral that plays an important role in healthy muscle function, regulation of our nervous system, energy metabolism and even in maintenance of our DNA. Calcium is a mineral that makes up much of our bones and teeth and as an electrolyte, plays an essential role in biochemical processes in our brain, muscles and more.

We recommend a daily serving of 20-40g of our cacao to help meet the recommended dietary intakes for these essential nutrients.



Therapeutic Profile - Uturunku (Jaguar)



UPLIFTING
Theobromine



CLARITY
Phenols (mg/g)



BLISS
Ethanol Amides



SATISFACTION
PEA
Phenylethylamine (ug/g)



AWAKENING
Tryptamine



JOY
Tryptophan



Sensations: Intense satisfaction, embodiment, connection, spiritual awakening, joy and happiness.

Flavours: Earthy, nutty, fruity.

Best for: Embodiment, trauma release, meditation, awakening, internal journeying, mindfulness, enhancing dream states.

Suggested preparation: Shave or grate 2-3 Tbsp (20-30g) per person into hot water or hot plant-based milk with or without spices (examples - cinnamon, cloves, vanilla, cayenne) and sweetener (coconut sugar, raw sugar, honey) and blend or whisk until creamy.

@seleno.health

www.selenohealth.com



Therapeutic Profile - Amaru (Snake)



UPLIFTING
Theobromine



CLARITY
Phenols (mg/g)



BLISS
Ethanol Amides



SATISFACTION
PEA
Phenylethylamine (ug/g)



AWAKENING
Tryptamine



JOY
Tryptophan



Sensations: Uplifting, bliss, clarity, joy and happiness.

Flavours: Sweet, fruity, acidic, bitter.

Best for: Movement, breath work, dance, energy, physical expression, exercise, heart opening.

Suggested preparation: Shave or grate 2-3 Tbsp (20-30g) per person into hot water or hot plant-based milk with or without spices (examples - cinnamon, cloves, vanilla, cayenne) and sweetener (coconut sugar, raw sugar, honey) and blend or whisk until creamy.



Is cacao a psychedelic?

Cacao has bioactive properties, but is not considered a hallucinogen. Phenethylamine (PEA) provides a link between classic psychedelics and cacao. PEA is the backbone to many of the happy chemicals in the brain, like dopamine and norepinephrine, and is also the backbone to psychedelic compounds like MDMA and mescaline (San Pedro). Anandamide, the "bliss molecule", is a neurotransmitter that binds to the same brain receptors as THC, mimicking the psychoactive effects of cannabis. Cacao increases the natural production of this happy molecule. Tryptamine enhances DMT production and activity in the brain, potentially enhancing dreams and imagination and creating entourage for other psychedelics.

Cacao has been traditionally combined with different types of psychedelic plants to enhance their experience - examples include the Aztec tradition teonanacátl (flesh of the gods); the combination of cacao and psilocybin. It is considered a powerful combination that increases the effect where the mushroom opens the mind and cacao opens the heart.

Ayahuasca is a traditional brew of plants that contains the molecule DMT, and activates the 5-HT_{2a} pathways to induce a hallucinogenic effect. These brews are typically consumed as part of a spiritual ceremony led by a shaman to lead one to the spiritual world and help cure one of illnesses and ailments. Considering the close relationship between DMT, tryptamine, serotonin and sleep; the 5-HT_{2a} pathway may also be responsible for vivid "cacao dreams" that some people have experienced after taking lots of cacao. Unlike Ayahuasca and San Pedro, cacao does not take you on a trip. Instead it creates the conditions for you to open up and experience more depth, intimacy, connection and presence. Cacao is a gentle guide through transformational shifts in consciousness.



CHAPTER FIVE

The Art of Ceremony



"Ceremony" is the act of making something sacred. Cacao ceremony begins the moment the seed is planted in the Earth. It is act of reconnecting ourselves to nature and to the energy of our ancestors. There are no rules for holding a cacao ceremony, however we want to highlight the importance of trusting your intuition and following your heart. Honouring the spirit of cacao and its journey to you, with presence and intention, is enough to feel the magic of its medicine.

Creating a Sacred Space



An altar is an extension of you. Creating a ceremonial altar is not just about transforming the energy of a space, it is a way of creating your reality. The altar can be seen as a microcosmos of your world, and the greater universe. When we commune with the elements of creation and connect with spirit through ceremony, we are able to re-create, and re-arrange our worlds through heartfelt intent.

To create an altar, first choose a space. Then choose representative items to encompass the earth, water, air, fire, and ether with candles, stones, shells, feathers, and crystal, or any sacred artefacts you feel deep resonance with. Be intuitive with it, there are no rules!

In Peruvian shamanic practice, the five elements - East/Fire, South/Earth, West/Water, North/Air, and Cosmos/Ether/Center - are called upon, when creating an altar, also called a mesa. These elements are summoned by choosing objects that represent each direction, and their encompassing energies. The sacred objects are then arranged according to each cardinal direction.

All lineages and teachers work differently, but the focus of intention is the reason for the mesa. Any altar that you create for yourself is a tool to support you in being intentional. It is a focus point for the medicine work you choose to do, and as such, it becomes a portal for the medicine you carry and share with others.

Honouring the Spirit of Cacao

We believe the ceremony begins the moment the seed is planted. Our cacao is produced farm to table, cultivated surrounded by native jungle, hand-picked, blessed in ceremony with reverence and supported with ancestral knowledge, creating the highest vibrational medicine. When working with cacao as a sacred medicine, it is of utmost importance that we approach her with deep respect and humility. Acknowledge cacao's journey from indigenous communities to you. Know your farmers and farms and the people behind it. See the whole thread of consciousness it contains. Cacao is nature's gift to us. It asks to be opened with the same appreciation as any gift - fully engaged in the process.



Gratitude

Cacao is an act of nature's unconditional generosity. Feel the life force within it, produced by indigenous communities in Peru and travelled over land and sea to nourish your body, mind and heart. See it as the gift that is it. Cultivate gratitude for its journey, it's medicine, the present moment in which you sit with it. Allow yourself to feel all of the things you are grateful for... your body, your family, your home. Allow the gratitude to grow and extend to every cell in your body. It is being connected to this feeling, that allows the medicine of cacao to run into your veins, sink into your bones, oxygenate your blood, open your mind, and open your heart. Out of reverence sprouts reciprocity. Always remember your are of service and gratitude is our highest energy we can resonate.

Set an Intention

The way to get the most out of working with Cacao as a sacred medicine, is to set an intention as you sit in ceremony. This can be an individual intention, a collective intention, or perhaps you go around your circle and ask each person to offer an intention to the space. Perhaps there is something you want to feel or welcome into your life. Perhaps it is a prayer for the wellbeing of all. Allow your intention to infuse into the medicine of cacao. The water you mix the cacao with to make your drink, acts as the medium to hold this intention as you consume the medicine. Where intention goes, energy flows. Be clear, be authentic, and tune into the frequency of your heart and what it wants to create in the world.



Drink Mindfully & Enjoy!

Drink quietly, and in the silence, notice the aliveness that permeates everything. The body rooted to the earth. The subtle rise and fall of the belly as you breathe. Breathe in the aromas, notice the subtle notes of fruits the cacao grew around, the bananas, the papaya, the mango. Bathe in your first sip. Notice how it makes you feel immediately, grounding deeper into the present moment. Allow each sip to absorb into your being and soften your mind. Engage all of your senses. Staying connected to your heart space, that golden glow that emanates from your chest, drink your cacao fully open to receiving its medicine. The greatest thanks you can give is your presence and fully enjoyment.



Thank you for your support!

We wish you all the best on your journey with the incredible plant ally of cacao.

To dive deeper into the magic of cacao, join our online Cacao Facilitator training available now.

WWW.SELENOHEALTH.COM



SELENO HEALTH