

# CHOCOLATE MAKER & OWNER, CHOCOVIVO

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29

Jul

2014 PATRICIA TSAI



*Patricia grew up in the midwest craving candy bars over her mom's home cooking. Now, her work at [ChocoVivo](#) involves educating the world about chocolate as a food, not just a candy bar. The irony is not lost on us – but hey, why mince words when we're talking about chocolate?*

***When did you know that you wanted to work***

***in food?***

At a certain point I woke up every morning staring at the ceiling with tears streaming down my face thinking: “*THIS* is what I was meant to do after graduating from a four-year college? I have about 50 more years to go.” That’s when I knew something needed to change.

***How did you get your current good food job?***

I started [Chocovivo](#) after graduating from Wharton and getting my CPA. I went on this journey to figure out how to combine the two things I enjoyed, people and food. Initially I had no intention of being a chocolate maker, but I wanted to understand the social and commercial impact of chocolate in society. Looking through the windows of chocolate shops around the world, I began to wonder what was behind the artisan-made truffle encased in a custom box. How was it processed? Where did it come from? As my curiosity peaked, so did the start of my chocolate journey. What makes the journey special is that through the years of trying to figure out how to stone-grind, I developed a relationship with my grower. It was important for me to know where I get my cacao beans. Should I go

through a distributor or a broker? There wasn't enough transparency in the cacao industry. Through trials and tribulations, I met my grower in Tabasco, MX. It was truly the start of my business as he became a mentor and a father figure to me. My relationship continues with him today and as the business grows.

***How did your previous work or life experience prepare you for a good food job?***

I grew up in Oklahoma. My mother went to a small community college in Taiwan to learn a more holistic approach of healing your body with food. My dad's a Western Medicine Doctor. You can see the dichotomy of growing up in a small farm town of 3000 people in Oklahoma with no other ethnic family or food. Mom cooked a full spread every night with things like Chicken soup with goji berries, ginseng, wood ears, and shiitake mushrooms, fermented kimchi, and fresh-pressed soaked soybean juice. Oxtail bones were already a norm back in mom's cooking repertoire. I remember Mom having to ask for Bones and Oxtail at the butcher shop in the grocery store or find it in the 50 cent section. I didn't understand food back then and was like any other kid that yearned for chips and pop. Long days of walking home from school in the hot Indian Summer and starving when I got home and just wanting to eat something – which in this case was just some fuji apples that were in the fridge or some tofu pudding with ginger syrup. Mom's deal with me to play high school sports was that I had to eat her cooking before heading to the basketball game. I truthfully preferred to eat nachos with Velveeta cheese topped with canned jalapeños and a snicker's bar at the gym concession stand. My choice of drink: Dr. Pepper.

***What was the greatest obstacle you had to overcome in pursuing your Good Food Job dream?***

I called it quits as a CPA. I'm still persevering in food, but it's the hope that one day the fruits of my labor will pay off. Hope is the word that fuels me right now, because it's not an easy process. I came from a world where I sat comfortably in an air-conditioned office. I thought about where I wanted to eat, what I could do on the weekends, who I could have brunch with on Sunday. My world turned 180 when I decided to leave. I toil away at something that not a lot of people understand. But the relationships that I've cultivated from hard working and trustworthy people give me that hope that one day this will pay off. The once steady paycheck is no longer here. Knowledge is power and when people understand and listen to what we do in terms of going from bean-to-bar and stone grinding using very traditional methods, that's the light that continues to stay lit in me.

***What can you identify as the greatest opportunities in food right now?***

The greatest opportunity is that people are more willing to listen to what producers are doing and appreciating it in a deeper level than 10 years ago.

***If you could be compensated for your work with something other than money, what would it be?***

Being a part of a community with like-minded philosophy on life & food. Steve Jobs said it best, thank goodness there is an end, because we work harder to hopefully create and see something through.

[Business, Production](#)