



✦ GARDEN OF ALCHEMY



THE ART OF CREATING
CEREMONY WITH CACAO

WELCOME

Dearest Cacao Lover,

Welcome to this magical journey with one of Mother Nature's most beautiful medicines. I simply love working with this Teacher. Cacao is the medicine of the heart and for me it brings such a soft and profound shift to my life, igniting my passions and stirring my longings into action.

The great thing about cacao is that there is no one way of experiencing a cacao ceremony. Sitting in ceremony generates a space to have our soul's yearnings heard, shared and met, and half the magic lies in the unknown of bringing yourself into ceremony and seeing what emerges.

I work highly intuitively and allow the cacao to guide me. Sometimes I meditate, use sound, smells or light touch, but whatever you are drawn to, there will always be teachings. There has never been a ceremony where I did not grow and open to more love.



WHY CACAO

Cacao cuts through the mental clutter, enhancing focus and concentration while enabling you to hear your heart. This makes self-expression, creativity and connection easier and more enjoyable. Our cacao does all of this while also creating a gentle state of euphoria that makes everything seem brighter and more fun!

This powerful superfood plant medicine has many benefits and uses, including:

- Enhancing consciousness and bringing awareness of the spiritual dimension of life.
- Increasing workplace productivity.
- Inspiring creativity and art.
- Improving athletics and physical training performance.
- Healthy living.



SPIRITUAL PREPARATION



One of the harder lessons I've had to learn on my Spiritual Journey has been preparation. On a hike, you can prepare with your gear, food, fitness and safety awareness. On a spiritual journey, it's slightly less obvious what's needed. How does one prepare for something when you don't know what it is? But like any Spiritual Journey, it always starts with curiosity.

My path, full of trial and error, has led to one simple truth: Intention. Everything starts with Intention. When one places intention into life, the whole universe comes together to help bring that into fruition. Feel free to use the intention setting document attached: sitting with it and filling it out before you begin your journey adds a powerful dimension to your work with the cacao.



I like to weave my intention into the cacao when I am making it. Then, as I drink it, this helps me focus on a desire so that I can then let go and receive. When it comes to creating your ceremonial cacao, there are no hard-set rules, only guidelines. As your guide, I will endeavour to inform, inspire and open you up to exploring and experimenting with your own methods and ingredients.

PREPARATION USING THE SENSES

Preparation is not only gathering your ingredients – it is a process that allows you to move from one state to the next. When I begin to prepare my cacao, I am transitioning from my everyday state into a more sacred and connected state. I am awakening my senses and allowing my intuition to emerge. The preparation is the gateway, if you like. When I get fully into preparation, everything else seems to flow more easily for me in ceremony.

We are creatures of habit and forming rituals gives us a sense of comfort and meaning in our lives. When we are creating a new habit or ritual, it is vital that we do it from a sense of joy and fun. This is not a chore! How we create is reflected in what is created in our lives. Gather your ingredients for your cacao and all the bits and bobs you want for your ceremony. This can be as simple as your cacao and yourself or as rich as feathers, stones, altars, photographs, etc.



Each ceremony usually has a purpose, so the objects you work with should reflect the purpose of your ceremony. Don't just use a crystal because that's what you think you should do or because you have seen it done by someone else. Only use objects that hold meaning to you or objects that you wish to imbue with meaning.

I advise against wearing perfumes or strong hair smells as your sense of smell can be heightened during a cacao ceremony. Instead, you can use essential oils and incense. A good grounding oil like sandalwood or cedarwood is a great oil to ground you. Select music that matches the mood you are in or the mood you would like to find yourself in. Or select music that gets you in touch with your emotions and your heart. If you play music, even better. Sound is such a mood enhancer; it can literally create the mood by which we do all else. If you want to listen to a playlist to get you started, have a look at my spotify playlist 'Annabelle Nicoll'.

It's always a good idea to wear soft clothes and layers, something that makes you feel comfy and totally in the mood you find yourself on the day. Be authentic; you may want to wear your tracksuit or you may feel inspired to dress up. Just make some effort



to ask yourself how you would like to dress. Have blankets as your body temperature can fluctuate during a ceremony.

Lastly, Cacao, in my humble opinion, has not been created by Mother Earth to just work its magic on you without tasting freaking delicious, so either follow one of my recipes for yumminess or begin to experiment to create your own wonderful Cacao elixirs.

INTENTION SETTING

<https://gardenofalchemy.com/intention-setting/>

SETTING ALTAR SPACE

<https://gardenofalchemy.com/2021/01/19/altars-and-sacred-space/>

CREATING A SACRED CONTAINER

The reason for a sacred container is to help you feel safe and bring your body into a deeply relaxed state. This allows you to access the more subtle aspects of self and the consciousness that the cacao is offering to you. We receive most fully when we can learn to still ourselves.

Make sure you won't be disturbed by switching off all your gadgets and anything that could interfere with your ceremony. Set your scene, make sure you have enough time and that you have everything you need to hand. I like to give myself a minimum of 45 minutes up to 3 or 4 hours, remembering that the cacao takes about 20 minutes to start coming into effect after drinking.



ALLOWING CACAO TO GUIDE YOU

By now, you may have realised that most of the work you need to do is in the preparation of the space, cacao and yourself. After that, it's really about dropping into a state of receiving. I like to do this by taking some deep breaths and consciously landing into my body. This is about moving from your mind to your body. Start to bring your focus inside, notice how you feel physically, emotionally. Bring attention away from thoughts into feelings. Sometimes, depending on my state of being, I do some stretches or shaking.

Ask yourself how best to settle yourself into your body. Bring your own tools and experience to this. This space is about grounding in first, letting go of the mind and bring yourself into presence. It is the sacred pause before consuming this life-giving elixir.

INTENTIONS AND PRAYER

I see cacao as a magic medicine. If I stay really present to what I am thinking and intending, it goes into the cacao as I drink it, and then the cacao can go to work to bring forth the inspiration needed to actualise my intentions.

I like to open my cacao ceremony with a prayer to bless the cacao. I hold my cacao close to my heart and voice my prayer. I call in my guides and give thanks for the assistance. I set my intention and I take an intentional sip of the cacao. Below is an example of a prayer that I use with cacao. You can work with the intentions you got in touch with using the Intention Setting Document and weave them into your own prayer.

PRAYER

*Dear Mother Earth, Gaia, Elementals, Ancestors, Angels, Father Sky, Cacao Spirit and any benevolent beings working for the highest good of me.
Please surround me in a golden sphere of protective light, allowing anything that is not for or of me to be removed and anything that is not of the highest vibration to be reflected away from this golden light.*

Connect my roots deep into the earth and open my crown to the intelligence of the universal oneness. Thank you for being with me, guiding my journey, opening my heart and nudging my intuition. Thank you for existing within nature, foods, sunlight and all weathers. For being where I notice you. Thank you for the synchronicities and the signs and for connecting me to all that is.

*Please guide me to make choices from love, to face the pain I avoid so it can be transmuted, to make small changes towards a new more expansive way of living. Help me forgive, release and trust in the flow of life.
Show me a world where I can bring my gifts and be seen.*

My Intention is

*Open my heart to Divine Love,
And so, it is
Aho x*

GRATITUDE, RELEASE AND LONGINGS

For each sip of my cacao, I name something I'm grateful for. Once I've named a few gratitudes, I explore if there is anything heavy on my heart that I need to voice and release. Then, I drink to my desires and longings. I send love to family and friends and I ask for resolution on anything incomplete in my life.

After I have finished my cacao, I often settle in and listen to some music, journal or rest, allowing the cacao to activate within me. After 15 minutes or so, I usually get an urge to do something. It could be going into nature and pick flowers, write a poem or a love letter, sing a song, etc. It's important that I stay with myself or with the person I'm drinking cacao with and not go out of the ceremony to call a friend, etc. This can wait until afterwards.

When I am complete, I close the space with acknowledging Cacao, my guides and the Spirit of Cacao and giving thanks for the journey. This helps to close the experience and give it a container.

Please note that these are only my ways and you and cacao will find your way together. Remember, there is no wrong way. The only guidelines I would offer are to avoid caffeine before and after, to not smoke during a ceremony and to avoid external information such as TV, social media, etc, as these will distort your ceremony. Hopefully, you have now been inspired to create a beautiful space and have some ideas about how to evolve your ceremony.

NOW, IT'S TIME TO MAKE YOUR CACAO

The Guideline for ceremonial cacao is 40-50g of cacao per person. I suggest no more than 3 cups of this quantity a week as this is a ceremonial amount and overuse can be heavy on the liver, let alone not giving yourself space to integrate each ceremony. If you want to have Cacao daily, use no more than 20g in your smoothies, hot chocolates, etc. Ceremonial Cacao is 100% Cacao. Read on to find out more about the origins of the cacao we use.



CEREMONIAL CACAO RECIPE

RECIPE FOR A FANTASTIC CUP OF CACAO

40 -50g grams ceremonial cacao (1-2 heaped tablespoons)

200-250ml of water or tea or a cup per person.

(Do not boil or let cool for 20 mins after boiling before mixing)

1-2 teaspoons of coconut sugar/maple syrup or sweetener of choice

1-2 drops Essential Oils

** Use Dōterra only as all other oils are not regulated for internal use. Spices (cayenne, ginger, black pepper, salt, etc), Dried rose petals, Superfoods. Be creative but keep it simple – don't overload the cacao with too many different medicines. Collect all your ingredients, prepare and clear your environment, smudge and light a candle. Close your eyes and take some deep breaths. Allow your mind to call in the people who will be drinking the Cacao. Follow your intuition on creating the cacao in regards to ingredients and consider the purpose of the ceremony. **

PREPARATION:

- Use a heavy knife to shave your cacao block into small slivers
 - Measure 1.5 heaping tablespoons of well ground cacao per person
 - Try to keep the water just warm enough to barely keep a finger in it. Do not boil the cacao this will destroy any nutrients and also gives the cacao a bitter taste.
 - To mix the cacao, place the cacao in a saucepan or bowl and add a small bit of the boiled water/tea and mix till all melted and then add some more water, do this slowly to prevent it separating. You can use a whisk or a blender for a smoother concoction.
 - Adding a sweetener of your choice will not affect the energies of the cacao. Many experienced cacao drinkers use no sweetener at all. Both choices are completely fine!
 - Add a drop or two of Dōterra essential oils. To purchase these get in touch for a free introduction to these incredible oils that have been tested for internal use
- (Note: we do not advise any other essential oil for internal use).



WHAT IS CACAO?

Cacao is a complex medicine that has been used for 5,000 years. On a physical level, it's one of the richest sources of magnesium and allows the nervous system, muscles and joints to relax. It also has a very active component known as theobromine, which opens the blood vessels and gets the blood stimulated. And finally, it contains Anandamide, known as the bliss molecule, and serotonin. On a physical level, it prepares the body for relaxation so that we can be aware and sensitive to our energies and surroundings. From that space, we're able to go deeper into our own journey. But unlike other plant medicines, cacao isn't really taking you anywhere. Rather, it brings you closer to yourself.

CACAO CONTAINS:

- High levels of anti-oxidants, such as flavanols & polyphenols.
- Theobromine, a bitter alkaloid that is a gentle & grounded stimulant, especially compared to caffeine, which is actually very low in cacao.
- Mood enhancers (neurotransmitters) such as serotonin, PEA & anandamide.
- High levels of magnesium, a muscle relaxant and important mineral in our diet.
- About 50% cacao butter, a source of healthy fats.
- Safe levels of heavy metals. We test our cacao to ensure this.



GARDEN OF ALCHEMY CACAO

100% Pure, Ceremonial Grade Cacao makes every endeavour better! Whatever your intention, Garden of Alchemy's Ceremonial Cacao will facilitate ease, enhance the experience and bring forth your personal brand of magic. The powerful nutrition in our cacao produces a sustained boost of energy, lasting several hours, without the inevitable crash associated with other stimulating beverages / foods.

FROM SOURCE TO YOU

It is my belief that every part of a process needs to be in alignment with the intention that was set. At the Garden of Alchemy, we aim to work with the highest vibrational medicines which means that from seed to finished product, we give attention to the environment that surrounds crop or animal, the people who work to produce these medicines and the companies who represent and sell these medicines. The whole chain needs integrity, love, respect and health so that we can deliver an experience and medicine that has the highest vibrational energy.

Sourcing the Highest-Grade cacao is a top priority for cacao ceremonies. We source our Cacao from one small independent cacao farm in central Ecuador. These local farmers work in the old ways without heavy mass-produced methods, leaving the plant to grow in harmony with nature free from chemicals and pesticides.



To purchase our Ceremonial cacao, please can you use this link:

<https://gardenofalchemy.com/shop/>

WHY CACAO AND NOT COCOA

So, what is the difference between Cacao and cocoa? It may look like only a letter change but it is everything.

The chocolate industry is a 6-billion-pound industry, but how much of that industry is real, healthy cacao? Not much. Food standards only require that a chocolate bar contain 11% cocoa to be classified as chocolate! Cocoa itself is not even the real deal. To make cocoa, the cacao needs to be heated up to separate the cacao butter from the solid (Dutch processing). This process itself destroys the natural superfood nutrients of the cacao and removes the delicious and healthy cacao butter. The dried cocoa is then ground between stainless steel grinders which need to be replaced often. You might wonder: where does the stainless-steel go? Not to mention that

the cocoa is coming from cacao that is heavily mass farmed with chemicals and a workforce of labourers, not lovers of cacao. So become vigilant to be sure you're reading Cacao and not Cocoa on the labels – ao is healthy, oa is not! Now that you know this information, it's worth thinking twice before you buy a chocolate bar or order a hot chocolate. Sadly, as a species, we have taken a sacred Mayan medicine and turned it into a mass-produced, unconscious, addiction-based food. One of our core visions at the Garden of Alchemy is to bring awareness to this and help bring people back to using cacao in its original and perfect form. You can still be creative and evolve this into yummy cacao bars, drinks and food while maintaining its magic and health benefits.



CONTRAINDICATIONS OF CACAO

Cacao is a strong bitter and stimulant, so there are some potential side effects to be aware of, as well as certain contra-indications. Since cacao is consumed in higher doses in ceremony, people might experience symptoms such as light-headedness, sweaty palms, headache or nausea. If this happens, simply slow down, drink water and practice self-care as needed until symptoms subside. Cacao can also stimulate detox symptoms in some cases. If you experience this, take it as a blessing and drink plenty of water as your body lets go of whatever it didn't like. This will likely be accentuated for people who are on a raw diet or who are fasting. Go with lower doses in this case.

Anti-Depressants

Certain anti-depressants are worth extra consideration. MAOI-based anti-depressants are contraindicated with the tyramine in chocolate, so a larger dose of cacao is not recommended. MAOI based anti-depressants are first-generation anti-depressants and are less common these days. People taking them are on a restricted diet that includes limiting or avoiding chocolate, so they should know if they can consume cacao or not. Side effects could include more serious headache and nausea, so make sure to check medications first. Additionally, there has been some concern with larger doses of cacao and SSRI type anti-depressants,

because of the MAOI's in cacao.

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

Serious Heart Conditions

The theobromine in cacao increases heart rate significantly and is a vasodilator, lowering blood pressure. If you have a serious heart condition, consider consulting a physician and certainly go lighter on amounts.

Pregnancy & breastfeeding

Like coffee or tea, it is important to reduce the intake of stimulating foods. The theobromine in cacao, which is very similar to caffeine, has a stimulating effect. Thus, we recommend using lower dosages (e.g. a maximum of 1oz in a ceremonial drink). Pure cacao can be fatal to dogs (and possibly horses and parrots) so be sure to keep it away from pets. If any symptoms do present, drink lots of water, get some rest and it will pass.



Disclaimer

You are advised to take full responsibility for your own health. All information provided is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be taken as healthcare advice, medical diagnosis, treatment or prescription. None of the information should be regarded as a promise of benefits, a claim to cure any illness, disorder or discomfort, a legal warranty or a guarantee of results to be achieved. Neither is this information intended as a substitute for advice from your physician or other healthcare professionals. You are advised not to use this information for the diagnosis or treatment of any health problem or for prescription of any treatment, including medication. Before altering or stopping any current medications, courses of treatment or medical care, starting any diet, exercise or supplementation program, you should consult with a healthcare professional. If you have, or think you might have, a health problem, your healthcare professional should be consulted.