

CACAO

& Pataxte & Vanilla



A comprehensive photo exposition to explore
Cacao as a plant Cacao as a flower
Cacao & flavorings as chocolate
Cacao in Classic Maya Iconography



Experiencing





the growth cycle



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This remarkable exhibit concept is based on over eight years ethno-botanical study of cacao and pataxte.

Plus more than two decades of curiosity about the ethnobotany of the sprouting tree on the Museo Popol Vuh vase.

Using two 21-megapixel digital cameras, and professional studio lighting, during field trips for many many years, we with to bring to the Museo Popol Vuh a quality of visual beauty which cacao and pataxte flowers deserve.

The entire exhibit is dedicated

- to being educational for all ages
- to be educational for all interests
- to showcase the absolute ultimate in digital photography quality





























The beauty of the Cacao flowers











The beauty of the Cacao flowers

PATAXTE







roots



seeds development

Pataxte

Theobroma bicolor











Pataxte
Theobroma bicolor



A close-up photograph of a Pataxte stem, showing its characteristic reddish-purple color and fine, greenish-yellow spots. The stem is thick and cylindrical, with a slightly textured surface. The background is blurred, showing other parts of the plant and a dark, shadowed area.

Pataxte

Theobroma bicolor





The beauty of the Pataxte flowers

Pataxte

Theobroma bicolor
Flower



CACAO and its exotic flavorings



Zapote-seed





Chile Chocolate



Orejuela



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Cordoncillo



Pimienta Negra

A close-up photograph of numerous cacao beans, showing their characteristic reddish-brown color and textured surface. The beans are piled together, filling the entire frame.

CACAO and its exotic flavorings





Bixa orellana flower young achiote pods



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Manita tree canak *chiranthodendron pentadactylon*



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Manita tree canak *chiranthodendron pentadactylon*
Monkey's Hand Tree









Or is it Morro or Jicaro?

The exhibit is dedicated to documenting how botanical studies, in depth, can assist archaeologists, epigraphers, iconographers, students, and the general interested public to break through and see the clear documentation and evidence for conclusions which can be drawn.

Chocolate is a beloved drink and food of millions of people around the world. Cacao drink was the royal beverage of the Aztec emperor and the Maya kings and High Priests.







The heart of this exhibit will be

- To show the growth cycle of cacao trees,
- From bud to flower
- From flower to tiny tiny beginning of the fruit
- From fruit to cacao processing
- From seed to sprout
- From sprout to seedling
- From seedling to cacao tree

We spent six years doing this above study: we planted cacao seeds, photographed them growing, and now raise our own cacao (in Vista Hermosa II, less than 2 km from the Museo Popol Vuh).

As part of the exhibit perhaps we can show cacao seeds sprouting.

- To explain the differences between regular cacao and other cacao species (such as *Theobroma bicolor* vs *Theobroma cacao*)
- We will also show all the other fruits of Guatemala which are visually similar in size and shape. There is even one fruit (same size and shape as a cacao pod) which even fruits directly from the tree trunk (as of course does cacao, but this faux cacao is not related to cacao in any way whatsoever).
- This exhibit will focus on revealing the over dozen flavorings which were used for cacao over two thousand years ago. We have spent the last several years identifying the flavorings and then finding each species in situ in Mesoamerica in order to do extensive photography.
- And we will show the results of year after year after year of study of cacao flowers, patataxte flowers, morro flowers and jicaro flowers to document (finally) whether the tree on the famous Museo Popol Vuh vase
 - o Is a cacao tree
 - o Is a calabash tree
 - o Or whether the fruit is a mixture, a generic califlory fruit (fruit which hangs from the trunk).

Background: familiarity with cacao

This theme for a photography exhibit is based on decades of studying 4th through 9th century Maya representations of cacao in ceramic art and stone sculptures. Additional background comes from raising cacao trees from seed, and watching the entire life cycle of cacao.

Plus I have been in the cacao areas of Tabasco (Atlantic coast of Mexico), in the cacao areas of Soconusco (Pacific coastal areas of Chiapas, Mexico), and in the heartlands of cacao production in several key locations within Guatemala.

Photographs of cacao from FLAAR have been used by Dr Michael Coe and by Dr Yoshiho Yasugi in their separate publications on cacao.

Published knowledge of flavorings for cacao

Flavorings for cacao are nicely listed by Sophie Coe (1994) and then also by Sophie and Michael Coe (2007) but you can find additional spices for cacao drinks listed elsewhere. In the last ten years there have been several excellent books on cacao which list various flavorings. Plus we have found flavorings mentioned in other sources. So our goal with this exhibit is to provide the full list.

Below is the basic list of flavorings for cacao. In the exhibit we will provide an even more complete list with about twelve additional ingredients.

- Achiote, *Bixa orellana*
- allspice, *pimenta gorda*, *Pimenta racemosa*
- chile
 - o Chilchote, *Capsicum frutescens*
 - o chiltipiquin,
 - o tonalchiles
 - o chilpaelagua
 - o chile that is widely sold in Guatemalan markets and called “chile chocolate”
- Quararibea *funnebris*, Rosita de cacao, *cacahuaxochitl*
- Marigold (*Tagetes lucida*) flor de muerto
- *Calliandra anomala*, *tlacoxochitl* (Sahagun, and Ratsch 2005:119).
- *Cymbopetalum penduliflorum*, Guanacaste, *uei nacaztli* in Nahuatl, ear flower, orejuela
- *mecaxochitl* (*Piper amalago*) *mecasuchiles*, Higuillo de limón. String flower
- *teonacaztli* (*Chirantodendron pentadactylon*), flor de manitas
- *Magnolia mexicana* flowers, *yolloxochitl*, heart flower
- Popcorn flower, *Bourreria huanita*
- piztle (the seeds of *Calocarpum mammosum*, mamey sapote)
- Vanilla, *Vanilla planifolia*
- Tobacco juice (Ritual of the Bacabs, 35-37).

Logically there is the potential for an impressive coffee table book on this subject, especially since most of the ingredients are flowers.

FLAAR and its team are also capable of doing digital video, for YouTube and we can also develop a video channel for the Museo Popol Vuh on all the flowers, flavorings, and related themes of this exhibit.

Naturally we can provide beautifully illustrated PowerPoint presentations, probably best

- One PPT on cacao and *pataxte* as plants
- One PPT on flavorings for cacao and *pataxte* drink
- One PPT on the Museo Popol Vuh vase: how to finally identify whether it is really cacao, or really calabash tree (or a typical Maya mixture of several species together).

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