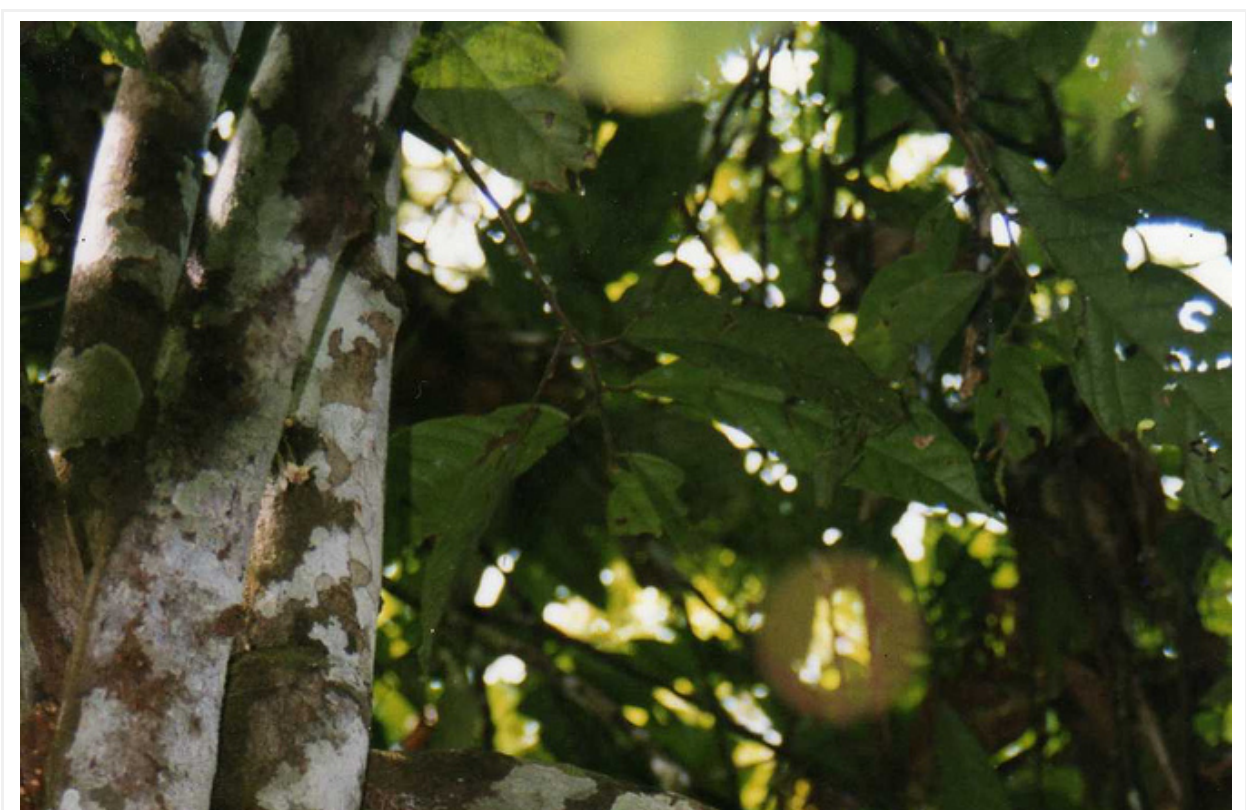




It's Chocolate Week – cocoa paste production at  
Inkaterra Hacienda Concepción

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**T**o celebrate National Chocolate Week, we're taking you on a journey to Inkaterra Hacienda Concepción, where 'Chuncho Cocoa' is grown, harvested in the Madre de Dios region. When using these fresh cocoa seeds, commonly known as Amazonian 'Forastero', the resulting chocolate is full of flavonoids – a group of natural compounds known for various health benefits – a chocolate lover's dream!







Flickr image courtesy of Leonora Enking <http://bit.ly/1Owhj72>

Not for the faint hearted, the cocoa seeds must be harvested with a telescopic ladder from the soaring Amazonian tree tops, cut down with a pair of extendable scissors. During the harvesting process, daggers and buckets are needed to gather the pulp, which is then separated from the seeds. The seeds are bright in colour, ranging from a yellowish-green, to vibrant reds.



After being pulped, a stage called fermentation and drainage takes place. Cleaned with fresh running water, the seeds are placed in a white bag and hung on a hook, left to ferment for two to three days, enhancing the flavour of the final cocoa product. Once fermented, the seeds are placed on aluminium plates to dry in the sun.





The seeds are toasted in a large pan over a low heat for ten to fifteen minutes, then placed in an aluminium bowl for quick cooling. Experts can tell when the seeds are ready, as they start to peel under the pressure of a spoon.



After being cooled and peeled, the seeds are ground in different ways, depending on the type of cocoa desired. For bitter chocolate, the seeds are ground twice in a grinder, releasing their natural oils and aromatic enzymes which give the cocoa its organoleptic properties. For sweet chocolate, the seeds are mixed with powdered milk and sugar, before being beaten to create an even cream. Ground under heavy pressure, a sweet flavour and deliciously chocolately aroma is produced.



**Happy Chocolate Week from Inkaterra!**