



**INTRODUCTION
TO CEREMONIAL
CACAO**

A GATEWAY HOME TO YOUR SACRED SELF

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WHAT HAPPENS IN A CACAO CEREMONY?

I began my journey with Cacao in a spirited fashion, under the stars and laser lights of an outdoor festival in Australia. Amidst a sea of people chatting loudly and buzzing on who knows what, I sat with my cup of bitter, gritty cacao, and slowly sipped wondering what all the hype was about.

I didn't know what to expect but I was pleasantly surprised by the sensations of gentle heart opening that washed over me. Despite the somewhat disorganised environment I was in, I felt a sense of deep, inner peace and aliveness.

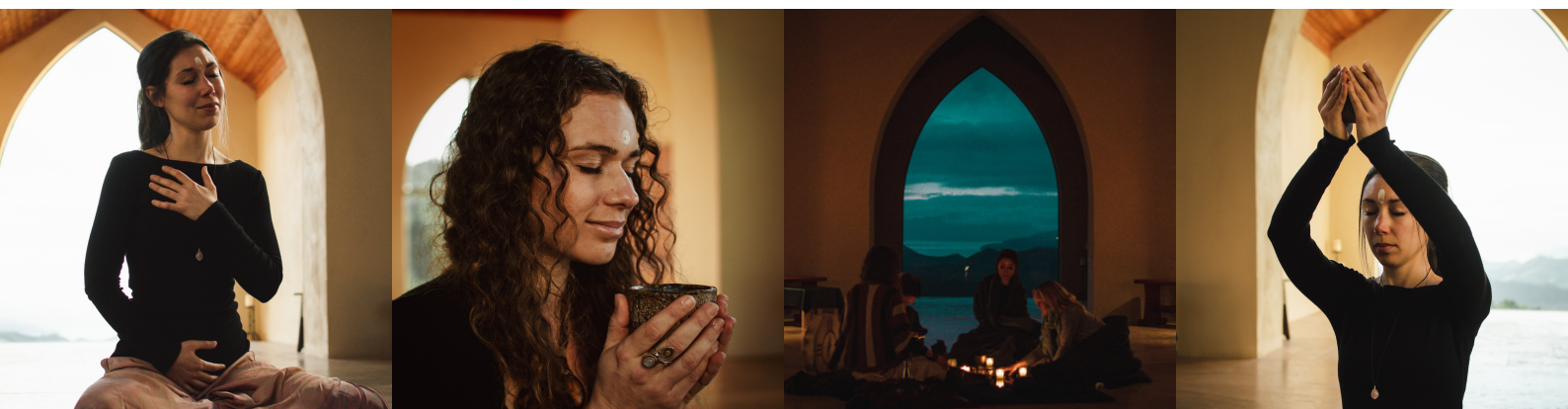
In the years to follow I learned that there was a key component missing in my first cacao initiation. The Art of Ritual. When held and served in a container of sacred ritual - with deep intention and presence - cacao is both food of the Divine and a medicine.

I have dedicated the last decade to living the art of ritual and journeying with the spirit of cacao and I can say that every ceremony is unique. Whether alone or with others the foundations are set with a reverence for the great life force that moves within us all, an in-spired intention and a state of presence, in the here and now.

The rest can be guided by a creative, soulful heART. It is common to share prayers, songs, stories, dance, meditation, silence, drumming... there really are no limits to how the sacred space can be facilitated and expressed.

By the way, I'm Jade, a holistic therapist, feminine embodiment facilitator and transformational self-care guide. I help women, like you, get to know yourSelf as you truly are, not as society has caste you.

In this short introductory guide I will share a little more about the healing qualities of Cacao, the ceremonial experience and what you can expect if you choose to explore this rich, heart opening drink.



WHAT IS CEREMONIAL CACAO?

Traditionally grown in Central and South America, cacao has been used for hundreds of years by Mayan and Aztec cultures in ceremonial and Shamanic contexts. The cacao fruit is harvested, fermented for 7 days to remove the pulpy exterior, then the beans are ground into a paste and used to prepare the rich drink.

The important difference: nothing is removed from the bean's final product, which makes it entirely unlike the cocoa powder you buy at the store.

In essence ceremonial-grade cacao is a pure, whole food, alive in spirit. When prepared for a sacred purpose, ceremonial-grade cacao maintains its full range of nutrients as well as the potency of the plant's heart-opening wisdom and healing properties.

A CEREMONY WITH CHOCOLATE? REALLY? HOW DOES CACAO ACT AS A MEDICINE?

The paste is prepared with intention, prayer, and a few practical ingredients: water, cacao butter, cacao paste, and a little bit of sweetener like honey or coconut sugar. This combination creates a strong, somewhat bitter flavor, nothing like the hot chocolate of your youth. But meeting the plant in its purer form is a direct route to its nutritional and healing properties.

Cacao is said to have high levels of anti-oxidants, mood enhancers (neurotransmitters) such as serotonin, PEA & anandamide and high levels of magnesium, an important mineral to help relax our muscles.

It also contains Theobromine a bitter alkaloid that is a gentle & grounded stimulant. This 'buzz' unlike caffeine is grounded and soothing for the nervous system.

The cacao ceremony itself can take many forms depending on the purpose of gathering and in many ways the facilitation of the ceremony contributes to the healing journey. In my ceremonies it is always held in a safe, sacred space, which could be outdoors in nature or cozied up in an intimate circle of women around an altar.

The ritual itself is a therapeutic process that accompanies the cacao journey.

IS CACAO PSYCHOACTIVE?

Cacao medicine is first and foremost a path to the heart. Unlike many shamanic plant journeys, cacao will NOT create an out of body or hallucinogenic experience. It does have the capacity to alter your state of consciousness and raise your energetic vibration, that is why so many spiritual communities are opening to its gifts.

As well as feeling a sense of aliveness and connection to a deeper, energetic centre of your being, on a more subtle level Cacao invites you into flow with life and the life force moving within. This heart connective journey can bring a sense of deep love both for the Self as well as the whole. It has the potential to heal pain around feeling separate or blocked from connection to Oneness, both during the cacao ceremony and in the days to follow.

CACAO IS NOT FOR EVERYONE

For most people, cacao is very safe! However, there are some specific cases where it is not suitable for everyone.

The theobromine in cacao is a vasodilator: it increases the heart rate and lowers blood pressure. Therefore it is not recommended for people with heart conditions, or woman pregnant and breastfeeding. *If you have low blood pressure please be aware that although cacao is a stimulant it will lower your blood pressure.

Cacao also stimulates the production of serotonin, and is not suitable for people taking anti-depressants and St Johns Wart.

In rare cases, people who are sensitive to theobromine may experience headaches or migraines (at concentrated dosages). As a general rule of thumb, if you are sensitive to any source of stimulant in your body you may find that a smaller (than ceremonial) dose is better and this is easily accommodated.

Cacao affects us all differently, we each have different sized bodies, different metabolic rates, different temperaments, naturally the experience is unique for us all. This is one reason I think it's so good to use cacao in a sacred ceremonial setting: when we come to the plant medicine with a specific intention, and with respect for & awareness of the power of the plant to affect us, we creating the best circumstances in which to get what we need from the experience in the most beneficial way.

DEEP CONNECTION IN CEREMONY

Sitting in circle sipping small cups of rich cacao, something undeniably mysterious, nourishing and beautiful unfolds. Whether drinking with strangers or with friends you know well, a palpable sense of connectedness permeates the space. In my circles, there is an invitation to journey inward, to listen deeply, to share stories and gently open to whatever is moving within. It is a safe, sacred space where you can be, just as you are.

When I feel the magic of the cacao warming my body and beating through my heart, I am so awake and alive, and at the same time so soft and in love with all of existence. Cacao ceremonies are a part of my day-to-day life now, and are one of my greatest healers and guides on this path of Daily Alchemy.



I would love to share the spirit of Cacao with you
and I hope you can join me in Ceremony.

From my heart to yours,

Jade xx

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