

Dear chocolate lover.

After one and a half year we're catching up on writing our newsletters. We've undertook many a thing and a lot has happened in the cacao business.

News from the gardens: one goodbye, one addition

Over the next few newsletters we'll highlight the different places where we harvest. The garden from which we have been harvesting the longest – garden nr. 01 – belongs to family Muler in Tijgerkreek. Already in 2008 Ellen started processing cacao pods from this place. Initially there were about 25 trees from an old planting, some of them planted over 60 years ago by the mother of the four brothers who currently manage the garden. Not all of these older trees are still standing though. A couple of years ago a toppling mopé tree (*Spondias mombin*) took several with it in its fall. Others fell from old age in strong gusts of wind. Over the last five years around 150 new trees have been planted. The youngest of these trees started bearing fruit this year. Harvesting and pruning here is often done to the sound of low guttural calls of howler monkeys that live in the forest bordering the garden.



A garden where we didn't harvest for that long was the one of Uncle Bert (Albert Etwaru Narain). For a period of three years we collected the pods from the five old cacao trees that grew amidst vegetables and other fruit trees. During his working life Mr. Narain worked as an engineer at the Ministry of Public Works and was involved in determining the road line of the Marowijne section of the East-West Connection. It was always a pleasure to stay a little while after harvesting and chat with Mr. Narain. Uncle Bert passed away in April last year at the age of 91. The last time when we

harvested there, three weeks before he died, the pommerak (*Syzygium aqueum*) was in full pinkish bloom. Since Uncle Bert's passing away, sadly, all pods from the trees are being picked even before his son has a chance to call us to let us know the fruits are ripe.

Fortunately we could add a new garden the same year. Cacao garden Martha in Lelydorp is small – it contains one cacao tree only, but that single tree bears more than 200 pods annually! The fruits strongly resemble the Peruvian Scavina cacao. At the end of the 1940's clones of this variety that had been cultivated on Trinidad were propagated and planted in Suriname. The first batches of chocolate we made from it were very promising!



Would you like to know from what exact garden the cacao that was used to make your chocolate bar originates? We recently started including so called "bean reports" in each and every wrapper. Besides the provenance of the cacao in it you will find a short description of the garden and detailed information on how and when the cacao was processed. This way all stages in our tree to bar chain are made transparent.



Education

We often receive requests from schools and training institutes to host workshops or guide students in their projects. We happily grant these requests whenever we can make these activities fit our harvesting and production schedules.

This past year we hosted students from the Poly Technic College, Advanced Teacher Institute (IOL), FHR School of Business, Master in Education and Research for Sustainable Development and school pupils from the International Academy Suriname.

We were also visited by pupils from different elementary schools that were preparing for their Show and Tell about cacao. All kids went home with a seedling cacao tree to plant in their schools yards after their presentations in class.

Higher cacao percentage

Some of you will probably already have noticed that our “pink bars” now hold a little higher cacao percentage: 72% instead of 70%. We learned that at the 72% mark the cacao lets itself be tempered just a tad easier. This way the bars remain, provided they are stored under the right conditions, longer in good shape. A big thank you to Mackenzie Rivers from Map Chocolate for pointing it out to us and to Adrienne Henson for getting us in touch with her.

70%
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72%

Optimal conditions for chocolate storage are: dry, dark, at a temperature between 18 and 20 °C in a room free of odors. The hot and humid tropics often pose challenges. Many people choose to store chocolate in the fridge to prevent it from melting. But when the cacao is taken in and out of the fridge it is so shocked by the sudden transition from sometimes over 30 °C to under 7 °C and back that the cacao butter separates from the cacao solids. This “blooming” shows itself as a greyish white film layer on the surface. The chocolate no longer looks appetizing. It has not gone bad, but it has become brittle and the flavors no longer develop the way they are intended to. So to prevent chocolate from blooming you have to avoid temperature shocks. In the tropics you better store it at room temperature in a closed box or Ziploc bag than in the fridge!



New days for the tree-to-bar cacao workshops

Fridays are our regular workshop days. But did you know that we also host them on Thursdays? We do. And because we can imagine not everybody being able to get time off from work on during the week, on occasion we also offer the workshops in the weekend.

During a tree-to-bar cacao workshop you will learn about the history of cacao in Suriname; we'll show the different processing stages from harvesting to tempering; you make a piece of skrati to take home yourself; experience the different flavors in chocolates made with cacao from different gardens and finally plant a seed to grow your own tree.

The workshop runs for 2.5 hours and costs 20 euro per person. More information and how to book can be read [here](#).

Meet the maker: Tan Bun Skrati @ Chocolátl Amsterdam

Chocolátl in Amsterdam is *the* specialty store in the Netherlands when it comes to single origin chocolates. You'll find bars from craft chocolate makers from all over the world: from Madagascar to Peru, from Iceland to Australia.

After visiting the owner Adil offered us a possibility to showcase Tan Bun Skrati to a small group of chocolate professionals consisting of store owners, foodies, a writer and a tea sommelier. On a cold October Sunday evening we talked to them about the cacao gardens, the importance of good post-harvesting techniques (fermentation and drying) for flavor development and the challenges of running a tree-to-bar chocolate company in the tropics. Of course we sampled our beans, chocolates and cacao tea made from the husk.



We owe many thanks to Adil and his team for providing this excellent opportunity to turn a spotlight on Surinamese cacao abroad. Drawing on the reactions that were posted on social media in the aftermath it seems that the visitors, like we did, had their selves a good time:

- "Super inspiring and WOW what a chocolate, thanks!"

Pictures of Meet the Maker: Tan Bun Skrati @ Chocolátl can be found [here](#). More information on Chocolátl and where they are located are to be found on their [Facebook page](#).

Not done reading yet? We uploaded a lot of content to our official web page www.tanbun.org. And in the new *gallery* many pictures can be seen.

Or keep track of us by liking our [Facebook page](#)

A complete current summary of our points of sale can be found [here](#).

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, just respond to the email with a "NO" and we'll stop the dispatch.

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