



THE FOOD OF THE GODS

Premium Swiss chocolate by 'Idilio Origins'

Cocoa was cultivated early and extensively in Mesoamerica and the first archaeological discovery of vessels containing residues from the preparation of cocoa brewing were found in Mexico, dating back to 1900–900 BC by the Olmec civilisation. The Maya believed that cocoa was given to man by the gods and the beans were not only used for ceremonial, ritual and culinary purposes, but also as a currency system.

Cocoa beverages became extremely popular in the Spanish court in the 16th century and were brought back from the New World by the Conquistadores. It was 1847 when Joseph Fry invented the chocolate in its solid form, mixing cocoa butter and sugar. With the

industrial revolution, chocolate became more of a mass product and milk powder was added to take away the bitterness.

Nowadays dark chocolate is experiencing a real revival and chocolatiers the world over are embarking on the search for the ultimate cocoa beans. Just like Idilio, a Swiss company based in Basel. As a result of their regular presence in the countries of origin and direct cooperations with local producers their quest to find the ultimate taste led them to Venezuela where they gained access to the rare Criollos varietal and the so-called 'Queen of Cocoa', the Criollo Porcelana, and the Andean Criollo Guasare in Venezuela, not to mention

a number of still virtually unknown Criollo varieties in Colombia. These varietal cocoa beans can only be made into chocolate in extremely limited quantities due to the very low production volumes. In addition to the Criollos varietal in their traditional environment, Idilio Origins has discovered various single-origins cocoas with outstanding taste characteristics.

Due to a series of epidemics the pure Criollos have become so rare that they can only be found through extensive searching in inaccessible regions and in very small quantities. They thrive only in mixed cultivations with other shade-giving fruit trees in the tropical rain forest. This is where Idilio Origins' managing directors Pascal Wirth and Niklaus Blumer find their cocoa beans which they use to produce a pure designated origin chocolate using nothing but cocoa and cane sugar in their recipes. They determine the roasting, cocoa proportion and conching method in collaboration with Sepp Schönbacher, managing director and head of development at Felchlin.

All of this compassion and know-how invested in a variety of dark chocolates was rewarded at the 2011 Academy of Chocolate Awards in London where the Finca Torres was awarded Silver in the category 'Best Dark Bar', the 'Amiari Merideña' made using cocoa sourced from the foot of the Andes to the north of Merida received the Gold Award, while two other bars received the Bronze distinction.

Idilio No 2 Selección Amiari Merideña, the Gold award-winning chocolate, is made of beans sourced in the area north of the Andean town of Merida and south of Lake Maracaibo, which is home to exceptionally valuable varieties of the 'Sur del Lago' cocoa. They represent a choice selection meeting strict quality criteria and feature a high proportion of Criollo. The selection of the best beans from the small farms in this region is carried out with the help of Idilio Origins' scientific team. The chocolate produced from this harvest is characterised by rich fruity notes, accompanied by an unmistakable hint of fresh mint.