



**COCOA  
NECT.**



# Unocace, Ecuador



**REGION:** Los rios, Bolivar, Guayas and El Oro

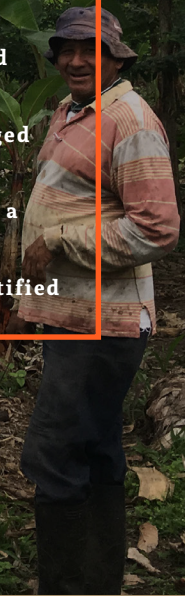
**VARIETY:** Arriba Nacional

**SOURCE:** Cooperative, directly purchased from farmers

**FERMENTATION:** Fully controlled, 4 staged wooden box system over 4-5 days.

**FLAVOR NOTES:** Earthy, dried plums and a touch of olives

**CERTIFICATIONS:** fairtrade, organic certified



## THE STORY BEHIND THE BEAN

Unocace's recipe for success is both brilliant and simple: high-quality fine flavour Arriba Nacional cocoa, a unified post-harvest protocol and an excellent quality control system. Put these ingredients together and the result is an outstanding cocoa bean which is praised by chocolate makers around the world.

The Unocace cooperative was born out of a project initiated by the European Union in 1996. This was, not coincidentally, around the time CCN51 quickly spread across Ecuador. CCN51 is a cocoa variety with some alluring benefits, including a high productivity and better resilience against diseases. Compared to Arriba Nacional however, there is a great loss in flavour. When many cocoa farmers switched from native varieties to CCN51, it became clear that the country's fine flavours needed to be conserved.

The Unocace cooperative accomplishes this by doing things differently. Not only do they pay farmers above market prices for their Nacional cacao, they also encourage them to use agro-forestry techniques. Chemical fertilizers and insecticides are widely available in the cocoa growing regions in Ecuador, making it a deliberate choice to farm organically. At Unocace they believe organic is the only choice

When entering a small-scale family Unocace farm, one immediately notices the difference with a non-organic CCN51 plantation. Instead of having trees planted in straight lines, the Unocace plantations offer a much livelier sight due to their intercropping system. The air is filled with sounds and aromas. The buzzing insects and the chatter of birds intermingle with the soft cackling of the chickens parading around the trees. Fragrant fruit trees grow among the cocoa, and provide the shade cocoa trees need to thrive. Of the different eco-friendly techniques that are used to improve the quality and quantity of the cocoa, one stands out. A growing number of Unocace farmers now has an irrigation system on their farm, which greatly benefits the crops during the dry season.

It is not only this natural way of farming which is ►



an essential step in securing top-notch quality, also the meticulously organized post-harvest protocol is imperative. Unocace built 11 buying stations across the 4 regions they work. The cocoa farmers harvest the cocoa pods and remove the pulp and beans from the husk on their farm, this so-called 'wet cocoa' is then transported to the nearest buying station. Here the fresh cocoa beans are fermented in wooden boxes, for around 96 hours, and turned every 2 days. Afterwards the cocoa beans are transferred to drying tables. These tables, covered with a mesh fabric, are set-up in a greenhouse like structure with an open ceiling. The beans are there to dry for 7 days, and diligently stirred every hour. Combined, all of these measures ensure that the beans are fully fermented and that the moisture can be released into the air so the cocoa dries evenly.

Once fully dried, the cocoa beans are transferred to Unocace's main buying station, ready to be bagged. Like in the previous steps, they spared no effort in optimizing their quality control in this final stage. Every lot arriving at the warehouse from the buying stations is checked. A random sample is drawn, and taken to their cocoa lab. Here they perform a cutting test to check the state of the beans, and even go as far as to make cocoa liquor out of the sample beans. Only if the cocoa has been fermented and dried to perfection, the cocoa has reached its full potential and is ready to be sent to chocolate makers.

***"Fragrant fruit trees grow among the cocoa,  
and provide the shade cocoa trees need to thrive. "***

In a country where an increasing amount of cocoa is grown as an industrialized, monoculture crop, we are proud to have found a partner with a focus on high-quality fine flavour Nacional cocoa. Using innovative techniques and strictly organic practices, Unocace's hard work is a major contribution in protecting Ecuador's fine flavour heritage.



## REVIEW BY



**Martin Mayer**

[Martin Mayer Schokoladen](#)

*Cacao from Unocace is characterized by a very consistent fermentation. The pleasant, discreetly intense cacao note of this cacao has earthy approaches, and is rounded off by some green olive and dried plums.*

## TASTE PROFILE

This cacao has two sides which complement one another wonderfully well: a very smooth and rich chocolate taste *and* some fierce flavours originating from a hint of green olive and dried fruit. The intense chocolate notes have very decent acid, and are guided by a well-balanced bitterness. Together it gives you the perfect ingredient for a delicious bar of chocolate.

**CHOCOLATE:**

**ACIDITY:**

**BITTERNESS:**



# COCOA NECT.

Connecting the world of Cocoa