

**COCOA  
NECT.**



# Makira Gold, Solomon Islands

**REGION:** Guadalcanal, Makira, Western Province

**VARIETY:** Amelonado, Trinitario, Criollo

**SOURCE:** Social Enterprise

**FERMENTATION:** Box system

**FLAVOR NOTES:** Honey, caramel, fruity, malty

**CERTIFICATIONS:** none - working towards organic

## THE STORY BEHIND THE BEAN

**O**n the Solomon Islands, cocoa grows everywhere. Brian, half Solomon Islander, half Australian and his Solomon Islander first cousin Ronnie, saw the enormous potential of the brightly coloured cocoa pods. Not just potential for the cocoa beans to become amazing chocolate, but maybe even more importantly, the potential to boost rural development on the islands. The cousins joined forces and Makira Gold was born.

But how does one start a cocoa venture in a country consisting of more than 900 islands situated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean? Ronnie and Brian began close to home, by improving the quality of the cocoa that came from the farms from their extended family. Meanwhile, Brian realised that especially with the steep transportation costs, they needed to operate on a larger scale to create a real impact.

Makira Gold now buys directly from nine farmers, with plantation spread over three different islands. The farms

range from 1 ha to 40 ha and are a great example of a flourishing multi-crop system. On all plantations, you'll find bountiful tropical flora, including gorgeous orchids and tall fruit trees which double function as shade trees for the cocoa.

Cultivating cocoa in this tropical paradise comes with its own set of demands. While the humid conditions are excellent for growing cocoa, they make drying the beans very difficult. The hot air dryers that are traditionally used to speed up the drying process, often lead to smoke contamination. This makes most beans unsuitable for specialty single-origin chocolate. Therefore, Makira Gold only works with farmers who sun-dry the beans. Drying the beans on sago palm mats under the bright sun is a delicate and time-consuming process, but it does wonders to the taste of the bean. Innovation has arrived though, and solar dryers are now used by a growing number of farmers. These dryers shelter the beans from the rain, while hot air flows through to dry the cocoa consistently and evenly.

For Solomon's cocoa farmers a lack of commitment from buyers is especially a harsh reality, and as a result you'll see perfectly fine cocoa pods rotting away when an order fails to come in (on time). Makira Gold is



quality driven, and wants to support the farmers that are willing to put in the time and effort that is needed to go from a good bean, to a great bean. Therefore, not only do they guarantee regular purchasing, but they also pay 2 to 3 times the average market price. On top of that the enterprise provides practical support such as distributing grainpro bags and collecting full bags of cocoa when they arrive at the central wharf. In just a short while this adherence has proofed successful. Cocoa farmers are eager to join the Makira Gold family, as demonstrated by the number of bean samples piling up in Brian's kitchen where his table top grinder is spinning fulltime to make test batches of chocolate.

The Solomon Islands' unreliable infrastructure in transportation, banking and telecommunication makes Brian and Ronnie's perseverance even more admirable. Picture cocoa beans in jute bags on a breezy beach, where they are loaded onto a wobbly boat. From there the bags are carried on board a larger ship and sailed to the central warehouse. After a rigid final check and re-bagging, the long journey in containers can begin. Anyone would agree that this is a challenging process at best.

A seemingly uneventful introduction of grainpro bags, can make all the difference in this part of the world. Now that the Makira Gold cocoa beans are packed in these much sturdier bags, they are protected from both sea water and rain during the long voyage across the Pacific. This introduction, together with countless other small and big interventions, characterizes their endless motivation to improve cocoa farming on the islands.

Ranked 156 out of 188 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index, rural development in the Solomon

Islands is crucial. Cocoa farming has the potential to be a significant accelerator for sustainable economic growth. Although setting up a fine flavour enterprise is clearly a tough bean to crack in this remote location, Ronnie and Brian have shown they can face the countless challenges. Their continuous efforts directly contribute to an impactful and sustainable change for the island communities. Therefore, we are very glad to be Makira Gold's partner and from our side of the world be a part of their journey to stimulate change in rural communities through wonderful fine flavour cocoa.

## REVIEW BY



### Iris & Bob

#### Solkiki Chocolate

*Solomon Islands is a new origin for us and the flavours of these beans are distinctively different from other origins that we have. It's wonderful seeing new origins appearing with great quality cacao with great flavour profiles, and see a more diversified market develop with more choices of great chocolate."*

## TASTE PROFILE

Ready for a flavour voyage? With nutty, honey, caramel and toffee flavours all in the mix, these beans are ready to take you on the trip of a lifetime. Let your grinder spin with delight, while the beans release their distinct bouquet of flavours and delicious aromas.

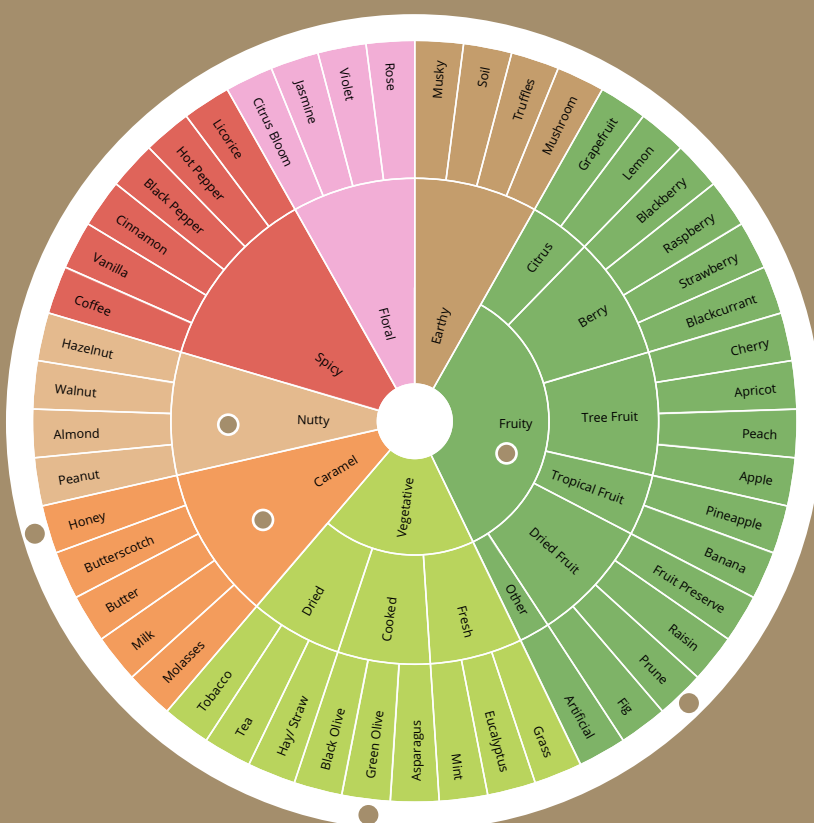
**CHOCOLATE:**



**ACIDITY:**



**BITTERNESS:**



# COCOA NECT.

Connecting the world of Cocoa