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# KUKUH OR XOCOLATL

*Theobroma*, the genus that all cacao trees belong to, literally means 'food of the gods' from the Greek *theos* for 'god' and *broma*, meaning 'food or drink'. The Swedish naturalist Carolus Linnaeus named the tree in the eighteenth century in tribute to the Maya and Aztec drink.

In Mexico cocoa beans served as currency and the 'food of the gods' was also at the heart of many rituals and ceremonies. This heady, aromatic, cocoa beverage, *xocolatl* or *kukuh*, was favoured by Montezuma, the sixteenth-century king of the Aztecs, who drank it as a potent aphrodisiac. A simple infusion, it is spiced with chilli and thickened with ground corn.

On a recent trip to Belize, Cluny Brown, our marketing manager, was given a bowl of *kukuh* and was told how to make this refreshing, slightly watery drink. Cocoa beans are roasted on a *comal*, a smooth griddle, until their skins fall away, then they are ground together with a little corn and ground black pepper or dried, toasted chilli pepper. A little sugar is usually added, although in ancient times the Maya used forest honey. The drink can be served hot, tepid or cold, and given the extreme heat and humidity in Belize, it is delicious chilled and very different from the Western version we enjoy on cold winter days.

Auzibio Sho, who works at the Toledo Cocoa Growers Association in southern Belize, claims that not only is it good for general well-being, it is also great for inducing labour as well. *Kukuh* is also consumed for health and energy and is given to sick people and those who need to work hard.

To make this revitalising drink yourself, take a handful of cocoa beans and toast them on a griddle. Crack open the shells and remove the cocoa nibs. Grind the nibs in a pestle and mortar to a smooth paste and then stir in some freshly ground black pepper and ground corn. Take about a teaspoon of the paste and add enough water to make a large glass. Sweeten with sugar to taste. The Maya vary this drink by adding spices such as cinnamon, allspice and nutmeg.



From 1983 through to 2009, Jasmine Sergeant enjoyed a successful career both as a Fine Dining Chef and as a Hospitality Consultant.

Sharing here with you is a growing database of +1000 recipes. Free.

Call Jasmine Sergeant of Team Commitment whenever you are curious of the value of your home.

Until then, please enjoy & feel free to share this evolving and growing recipe database.

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