

Mono Bravo Arriba

Preserving an heirloom Arriba Nacional in the
Mache Chindul cloud forest of Esmeraldas



ORIGINAL BEANS

TASTE THE EARTH'S RAREST PLACES AND PRESERVE THEM



Mono Bravo Arriba

How it started

It started in the summer of 2012 when Philipp, Chief Grower of Original Beans, received a call from a conservationist colleague, Amy Rogers, then Director at the Pinchot Institute for Conservation. Amy lived in a 3-story bamboo house on Mompiche beach in Ecuador and was leading a [conservation project](#) to protect the Mache Chindul Bioreserve, located upriver from her beachhouse. The project was nearing its end and no future funding was in sight. Could one of the purest Arriba cacaos of all Ecuador, grown organically in Mache Chindul, save the project?

The answer is yes and the Mono Bravo Arriba cacao is how. Since Amy's summer call, our Bean Team has spent many months on the ground in Mache Chindul. Inside the Bioreserve we encountered a remote village called Mono Bravo (wild ape), forest people with few possessions, and even fewer opportunities, but all the talents to make much from little.

The bean: [original Arriba Nacional](#)

The remoteness of Mono Bravo guarantees that their heirloom Arriba Nacional cacao remains unaffected by Ecuador's boom in hybrid cocoa. Once a landmark of Ecuador, heirloom Arriba Nacional can be hard to find in today's times of hybrid cocoa, with the Napoleon of them all, CCN-51, taking over the homes and birthplaces of the flavourful, heirloom Arriba Nacional. And many cacaos from Ecuador wrongly carry the label Arriba Nacional nowadays, since they contain modern and foreign hybrids that have been spread throughout the country.

The Arriba Nacional is a cacao family that bears a wide range of flavours, depending on what branch of the family each bean belongs to and the terroir in which it grows. Leading cacao genetic scientists believe that the Arriba Nacional originates from the Cusco region, where indigenous peoples, back in pre-Inca times, selected and propagated their favoured cacaos based on the flavours of the pulp, which they traditionally used for juice. The



best of these cacaos were later brought to the coastal areas of Ecuador, including the Esmeraldas, where some of the ancient genetic traits still exist today.

The origin: [Mache Chindul Ecological Reserve, Ecuador](#)

The name of the Arriba Nacional cacao is said to originate from "de rio arriba", meaning upriver, which allegedly was what a Swiss chocolatier in the 19th century was told when he, while navigating on the Guayas River, encountered locals bringing cacao beans downstream. That precisely is how things go down in Mono Bravo nowadays: old and young cowboys of the village elegantly travel over streams and creeks on horseback to bring their exceptional beans to us.

Over the years, we have sourced from different communities in the Esmeraldas province, but we prefer Mono Bravo for purity and taste. Arriba Nacional has been cultivated in Mono Bravo for several generations. We even discovered a peculiar type of Arriba Nacional with unusual small and flat pods, which the locals call Pajarito (little bird). The Arriba Nacional of Mono Bravo is characterized by its strong cacao notes and mild notes of hazelnut.

Bean profile

Name: Mono Bravo Arriba

Origin: Mono Bravo village, Mache Chindul Ecological Reserve, Esmeraldas province, Ecuador

Varietal: Old-grown Arriba Nacional cacao of a purity hard to find in Ecuador these days, including the peculiar Pajarito (little bird)

Tasting notes: Strong cacao with light notes of hazelnut

Harvest: August–November

Rarity: Total harvest volume: 15Mt annually

Terroir: The moist, dense and lush terroir of the Mache Chindul pacific cloud forest

Fermentation & drying: The individual farmers of Mono Bravo prefer to ferment their own beans for 3–5 days, depending on the season, in bags covered with banana leaves. Focus is on reducing acidity levels without losing the rich flavours. The beans

are hereafter dried gently in the sun at drying facilities run by the village-based farmer association.

Technical aspects:

Fermentation level: > 70%

Moisture: < 7%

Size: 110–130g/100 beans

Certifications: Organic

Growers: Village-based farmer association of smallholders

Cacao and community project

The Mache Chindul Ecological Reserve lies at the southernmost point of one of the most threatened and least known ecosystems on earth, the pacific Chocó rainforest, of which only 4% remains due. Mache Chindul is under severe deforestation pressure caused by illegal logging and slash-&-burn agricultural practices. The Mache Chindul came to international attention by world renowned ecologist Norman Myers, when he declared it as one of the world's top three conservation priorities in 1995. The reserve spans 120.000 hectares and it is home to one of the most biodiverse animal and plant populations in the world, 10 percent of which is believed to be endemic. More than 300 species of birds have been documented, and at least 24

mammal species reside in these forests, five of which are on the international threatened species lists: the Jaguar, the Jaguarundi, the Oncilla, and the Giant Anteater, while troops of the endangered Mantled Howler Monkey are heard daily.

What the project does

- Preserve and reforest local Arriba Nacional cacao varieties by planting cacao forests on the borders of the Mache Chindul Ecological Reserve
- Protect 200 hectares of highly biodiverse rainforest through forest conservation agreements with local communities
- Help farmers get organic certified
- Provide training in organic cacao-agroforestry, post-harvest handling and quality control
- Support smallholders with proper farming equipment and tools



24

households receive
Original Beans
premium price



20

cacao growers
trained in forest-
friendly and high-
quality cacao
production

80

hectares under
heirloom cacao

2

fermentation and
drying centers
established



100%

Climate-positive
supply chain

200

hectares of primary
forest preserved
through forest
conservation
agreements



1.500

hectares of rainforest and
native landscape indirectly
safeguarded by supporting
forest-friendly cacao
growing

To learn, view and hear more visit our

[Photo Gallery](#) and [Project and Impact Tracker](#) pages

Please reach out to us if you would like to taste a cacao—or chocolate—sample or if you want to hear more about the bean, region, growers, and supply chain. We would love to tell you more and explore how we can unite our efforts to make the world better with chocolate.

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