

# The Piuras: Blanco & Malingas

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Preserving heirloom cacaos in the fruitiest  
of terroirs: the Piura Valley, Peru



ORIGINAL BEANS

TASTE THE EARTH'S RAREST PLACES AND PRESERVE THEM



# Piura Blanco & Piura Malingas

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## How it started

In 2007, when Philipp Kauffmann was about to found a pioneering conservation chocolate company, later called Original Beans, he heard about a rare, white cacao that had been growing in the Piura Valley of Northern Peru for centuries. The messenger was Cesar Paz from Agronomists without Borders, whose brother Santiago headed Cepicafe, a local coffee farmer cooperative. Philipp was soon traversing the coastal dry forests of the Piura Valley to arrive in the tiny village of Chulucanas. Here is how Cesar Paz recounts the events:

“We traveled to Chulucanas to meet with a small farmer cooperative called Apromalpi, who were growing mango and cacao together. As we walked across a cacao field near Chulucanas, I could see the faces suddenly change in surprise. I didn’t initially understand what was happening. Philipp and Pierrick (Chouard) spoke in English and I only heard: “it is very good!” It was after dinner, when we were having some beers, that I asked about the cacao we had tasted and I will always remember the answer. Pierrick said: “I have been working in chocolate for more than 20 years and have seen hundreds of cacao farms. But this is one of the best cacaos of my life”.

Since then, the Piura Blanco has been carefully selected and replanted. More than 250,000 cacao, shade and timber trees have been planted and, by helping local smallholder families to shift from unsustainable and unprofitable monoculture rice cultivation to diverse cacao-agroforestry systems, the net



incomes of the local families have tripled. Over the years, the Piura Blanco has grown back from near extinction to become one of the top-awarded cacaos worldwide.

When we discovered and started replanting the white Piura Blanco, a cacao rush kicked in along the entire Piura Valley, including in the small village of Malingas, where the local smallholders began growing cacao again from a few old cacao trees in the village that had survived the mango boom of the 1980s. Today in Malingas, their distinctive heirloom cacao is grown under shade in the old mango orchards, intercropped with lemon and orange, which contributes to the kaleidoscopic fruitiness of the Malingas beans. When Jan, member of Original Beans’ Bean Team, first encountered the village of Malingas in 2014, he was surprised to find a heirloom cacao with a low percentage of white beans and an outstanding aromatic profile, since Malingas is embedded in a region known for its white cacao—a fact that makes the village-based farmer cooperative proud of their unusual cacao.



## The bean: Piura Blanco and Piura Malingas

Both infused with the characteristic fruitiness of the cacaos of the Piura Valley, the Piura Blanco and the Piura Malingas are a study in how two cacaos grown in the same region deliver richly different flavours: the Piura Blanco with its long, elegant notes of raspberry and

pecan, and the Piura Malingas with its short, dazzling notes of lemon and passion fruit. Not just a play in contrasts, both cacaos are delightfully fruity and exceptionally light.

The two cacaos are different morphological-ly in that the Piura Blanco are predominantly white beans enclosed in smooth and rounded cacao pods, while the Piura Malingas has a low percentage of white beans enclosed in highly furrowed and elongated pods. Both cacaos are old-grown landraces, as pure as they get, since no modern hybrid cocoas have been planted in this area.

Cacao genetic experts believe that the Piura Blanco is an “albino” of a native cacao, where only the “albino” survived the passing of times in the dry Piura Valley. The cacaos grown in Malingas share many morphological traits with the Nacional Arriba family of Ecuador, but the beans are lighter in both colour and taste. Today’s borderline between Peru and Ecuador is less than an hours drive from Malingas and these cacao origins haven’t always been demarcated by the current borders of the two nations. Historically, Northern Peru and Southern Ecuador could just as well be considered as one cacao origin.

### The origin: Piura Valley, Peru

Vast forest areas have been deforested in the Piura Valley in the recent decades and changing rainfall patterns—severe droughts, followed by floodings—have made the valley a hostile environment for the local families and their crops. The valley gets rain just a few months out of the year and it is desert-hot in the dry season. Preserving and expanding the tree cover in the valley is therefore of utmost importance in order to generate humidity, enrich the soil, gentle the climate and protect the waterways of the Andes. When walking through the cacao groves of Piura, hundreds of butterflies take to their wings, drinking from the streams that run down from the Andes—the same waterways that keep the cacao trees blooming on desert-hot days. Our reforestation and forest conservation efforts are contributing to the conservation of 2.800 ha of dry forest, a habitat for the endangered puma and an astonishing diversity of birds and butterflies.



# Bean profile: Piura Blanco

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**Name:** Piura Blanco

**Origin:** From the villages Paimas, Puerta Palache and Las Lomas in the San Lorenzo Valley, at the foothills of the Sierra Piura, in the greater Piura Valley, Peru.

**Varietal:** Cacao genetic experts believe that the Piura Blanco is an “albino” of a native cacao, where only the “albino” survived the passing of times in the dry Piura valley.

**Tasting notes:** Cherry. Raspberry. Pecan.

**Harvest:** February–June and October–November

**Rarity:** Total harvest volume below 80Mt

**Terroir:** Dry forest. Just a few months of rain out of the year. Trees are nourished by water streams running down from the Andes.

**Fermentation & drying:** The beans are fermented for 6–8 days in wooden boxes at a centrally located post-harvest station and the fermentation process is adjusted to climatic circumstances by experienced farmers. Focus is on attaining high quality without losing volatile fruity flavours. The beans are hereafter dried gently in the sun.

**Technical aspects:**

White beans: > 40%

Fermentation level: > 70%

Moisture: < 7%

Bean size: 110g / 100 beans

**Quality:** Quality is evaluated and flavours are validated for all shipments to assure that they comply with Original Beans standards.

**Certifications:** Organic

**Traceability:** Full

# Bean profile: Piura Malingas

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**Name:** Piura Malingas

**Origin:** Single-village cacao from Malingas, Piura Valley, Peru

**Varietal:** Old-grown landraces with low percentage of white beans enclosed in highly furrowed and elongated pods. Morphological traits in common with Ecuadorian native cacao.

**Tasting notes:** Lemon. Red berry. Passion fruit.

**Harvest:** Summer 2017

**Rarity:** Total harvest volume 8Mt

**Terroir:** Under the shade of old, large Mango trees and intercropped with orange and lemon. Desert-hot in the dry season, but nourished by water streams running down from the Andes.

**Fermentation & drying:** The beans are fermented and dried at the post-harvest facilities of an experienced member of the village-based farmer cooperative.

**Technical aspects:**

White beans: < 10%

Fermentation level: > 70%

Moisture: < 7%

Bean size: 100–120g / 100 beans

**Quality:** Quality is evaluated and flavours are validated for all shipments to assure that they comply with Original Beans standards.

**Certifications:** Organic certified.

**Traceability:** Full

# Cacao and community project

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Northern Peru's dry forests are among the most important and threatened bird habitats in the world and 17 bird species are threatened in the wider Piura region alone. The major threat to these unique ecosystems is deforestation caused by irresponsible agriculture. The rare find of a nearly extinct white cacao variety in 2007, which we have named Piura Blanco, allows us to pay substantial incentives for sustainable cacao farming with high pay-back per hectare. We have encouraged the local smallholders to shift from unsustainable and unprofitable monoculture rice cultivation to diverse cacao-agroforestry systems, which has tripled their net incomes. Due to our ongoing reforestation efforts, the Piura Blanco has grown back from near extinction to become a sustainable and profitable production. Our reforestation and conservation strategy is implemented in partnership with Norandino, a regional farmer cooperative. In 2016 alone, more than 100,000 trees were planted. Our reforestation and forest conservation activities also contribute to the conservation of 2.800 hectares of primary dry forest.

Our current main focus is to support the amazing conservation work of a youth organization in Puerta Pulache. So far, the young people have raised more than 20,000 cacao

seedlings and more than 10,000 native forest trees! With the support of Original Beans, the members have already learned how to graft and plant cacao. Original Beans also supports the group with necessary tools.

## What the project does

- Identification and selection of genetically strong Piura Blanco trees
- Establishment of nurseries to raise 250,000 cacao and forest trees
- Support the conversion of 200 hectares of arid degraded land to diverse cacao-agroforestry systems with a high water-holding and soil enrichment capacity. The cacao-agroforestry groves will function as sustainable demonstration farms and green corridors for wildlife between existing forest zones
- Support the establishment of irrigation systems that capture and store limited seasonal rainfall from the Andes mountains
- Support the establishment of a 4 ha cacao clonal garden
- Training courses in nursery management, cacao grafting and production of organic fertilizer

4

ha cacao clonal  
garden

130

cacao growers  
receive Original  
Beans premium  
price\*

130

cacao growers  
trained in forest-  
friendly cacao  
growing\*

100%

Climate-positive  
supply chain

2.800

ha forest under  
conservation  
agreement

4

nurseries  
established



125.500

trees raised in  
nurseries in 2016

\*Piura Blanco:107; Mallingas:23

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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