

Living Koko, Living Culture

By Fipe Preuss

It can take up to three years for a Koko tree to be mature enough to produce her own fruit, growing her own seeds. With the right care and relationships she has the capacity to continue to produce her fruits till she reaches 100years of age.

The importance of her relationships start from the moment she is planted. To ensure the best support from the moon she can be planted the day the moon is new until the day it is full. To ensure the best support from her Aunty relationships she is pressed into the mulch of cacao pod and coconut husk. The coconut tree will have an ongoing Aunty relationship with the cacao. Aunty coconut will shield her from wind and provide her with shade from direct sunlight. Perfect conditions that will support the cacao fruits journey.

The indigenous farming practises that have supported thousands of years of food cultivation in the Pacific Islands embody the holistic & relational concept of the Vā. The Vā - the space in-between spaces, the relational space between people, things and cosmos. While connecting deeper with Samoan cacao farmers it is with pride that we witness their abilities to read natural resources, gravitational messages via the cosmos and then their understanding on the important relationships between their crops and their community.

In Samoa when you are served a cup of Koko Samoa (Drinking Cacao) it is time for a social ceremony. As the Koko opens up heart capillaries, improve the function of our blood vessels, reduce insulin resistance and reducing our blood pressure, it allows us to Talanoa (deep conversation). We accept and appreciate the deep conversations, there is a removal of transactional ways and a respectful clarity and reciprocity grows.

This respect and reciprocity continues from community back to environment, from Papa (Mother Earth) to community and for Living Koko this is where our journey starts. From understanding and appreciating each relational space from Papa to community we are able to collaborate ensuring we are all taking a shared valued approach. A soulful approach that is not driven by profit, but by working together to develop something that is sustainable, healing and stems from food sovereignty in the Pacific.

Together with indigenous knowledge and complimentary production practises we all are able to sustainably offer our cacao medicine to the world. Together we create small batch inclusive cacao products, made from the richest cacao beans, rich in iron, magnesium and zinc.

Knowing the bodies of our ancestors have nourished the soils these beans have taken growth on reminds us that our practises need to be for the people. Supporting sovereignty over the food systems in the Pacific avoids the privilege and power being held by those at the marketing and retailing end of the supply chain and gives it to the people.

Like our ancestors and today's traditional famers we aim to use as much as possible of each cacao bean, assessing every by-product for its potential. As a result, the Living Koko product line chocolate, cacao nibs, cacao husk teas, fibre and skin care products that use both husk and reworked chocolate. All profits from their skin care range go back into community- driven agricultural projects in the Pacific Islands.

We believe that everyone has the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable method and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.