



# hanover healthfoods

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## Healthy Chocolate?



Perhaps the biggest growth in health food is that of raw cacao. Once a staple of the health food store, the milk chocolate raisin has now been replaced by raw chocolate covered goji or mulberries. For chocolate chips, see raw cacao nibs and you can't beat raw cacao covered granola or kale chips, which you won't believe until you taste them. More seasonally, Inspiral have come up with Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh hand made raw choccies.

Raw cacao is packed with natural polyphenol antioxidants – more than blueberries, cranberries, green tea, pomegranates and red wine. There is much research and evidence to show that the phenols in dark chocolate provide cardiovascular health by improving blood flow and reducing blood pressure. Cacao is one of the best sources of natural magnesium, which is critical for a happy and healthy heart. Theobromine is a superior vasodilator, which means more oxygen gets pumped into the bloodstream, making it a great food for exercise. The cocoa butter in dark chocolate can lower LDL (bad cholesterol) levels. It also contains oleic acid which can raise HDL (good cholesterol) levels. These benefits are reduced when raw cacao is put through

the mill of industrial chocolate processing, which includes roasting. Raw chocolate avoids temperatures above 42 degrees Celsius.

Most chocolate on sale contains cheap fats and too much sugar but dark chocolate, of the 70% variety is often recommended by nutritionists to clients, albeit in small doses.

The process of working the beans is called conching. Conching starts with roasting (unless making raw chocolate), then the beans are "winnowed" to grind them into smaller pieces and the conching process allows fermentation over up to 78 hours. The purpose of conching is to distribute cocoa butter evenly within chocolate, as well as improving flavour, by releasing volatile oils and lowering acidity. During conching the room is reported to smell like vinegar.

IQ is based in Stirling and specialise in raw chocolate. By not roasting the beans, and keeping the conch under a certain temperature, the enzymes in the cacao are preserved, which makes the nutritional value of the chocolate higher. IQ use single origin Criollo beans, from the Satipo region of Peru. Criollo are the oldest strain of cocoa bean, said to have "an intoxicating fruity flavour" and account for less than 5% of the world's cocoa.

Ali and Friederike Gower head Haddington-based company, The Chocolate Tree. In addition to hand made chocolates, cakes and ice creams, they produce two ranges of chocolate bars; organic and bean to bar. "Bean to bar production empowers the chocolatier to have not only better

*(continued overleaf)*

## DEFINING: Rhodiola Rosea

*Rhodiola rosea* has only been sold in health food stores for just over ten years, but it has established itself as one of the most important remedies for people who are under stress.

*Rhodiola* is an alpine plant, commonly called Arctic Root, which grows in a great swathe of northernmost Europe, from Scotland all the way to Siberia. The first recorded use of it medicinally was by natives of Scandinavia and Siberia for helping them cope with the extremes of winter, not just the temperatures but also the light-starved, lengthy season generally.

It later became the subject of research behind the Iron Curtain when Soviet scientists tried to extend its use to athletes and cosmonauts and it is that Soviet research which formed the bedrock of what we now know about how it works.

I have always found it easiest to describe *Rhodiola* as having the benefits of an adaptogenic herb such as ginseng mixed with that of a mood-booster like St John's Wort. The truth is more complex but it is a good start. An adaptogenic herb is one that helps the body adapt to various stressors, whether they are physical, mental or environmental. *Rhodiola* is a superior remedy and is generally regarded as harmless whilst exerting profound supportive effects.

Active compounds in *Rhodiola* (rosavin and salidroside) improve the uptake of serotonin (Happy Hormone!) into the brain. Research has also shown *Rhodiola* helps preserve

serotonin by inhibiting the activity of an enzyme called COMT. *Rhodiola* can increase serotonin by 30%. *Rhodiola* seems to have a balancing effect on serotonin but is not associated with enhanced liver function which is one reason St John's Wort is not recommended by doctors to be taken with certain drugs.

*Rhodiola* has a range of actions, including supporting the adrenal glands which can normalize blood sugar, potassium levels and blood pressure. It increases the activity of natural killer white blood cells and acts as an effective antioxidant.

It has also been shown to increase the levels of ATP and creatine in muscle tissue which will aid physical activity. It is possible that it may improve mental performance by lowering levels of certain brain hormones.



John, Diploma in Health Food Retailing

### Make Your Own Raw Chocolate (we have all the ingredients!)

**70g Raw Cacao Butter**  
**50g Raw Cacao Powder**  
**1-2 tbsp Raw Agave Syrup**

Slowly melt the cacao butter in a glass bowl over lightly boiling water. When melted whisk in the cacao powder till smooth.

Then add your chosen sweetener to your own taste. Agave syrup is popular but you can use coconut sugar too.

At this stage you can add your own twist by popping in anything from cacao nibs, coffee grains, chopped nuts or fruit, peppermint or orange oil, rose peppercorns, chilli flakes, rose petals, the choice really is yours.

When fully amalgamated, pour into moulds and leave to set in the fridge. Within hours you will have concocted your own delicious raw chocolate treats!



control over the quality of their product, but also the ability to get closer to the farms and people who are growing cacao". Ali is already building relations with a farm in Trinidad, and through their UK buyer they can work with the communities in Ecuador and Peru that grow their chocolate. By working directly and cutting out the long chain of middle men, the farmer will receive 6-10 times the normal price for his cocoa beans. "In the bean to bar range, we like to use pure ingredients, so no vanilla or soya lecithin, just cacao, cocoa butter and sugar. Quality, sustainable and ethically traceable sources are important too. Bitter chocolate is often the result of over roasting the beans or using poor quality beans in the first place. Bean to bar chocolate allows for much more care and attention, bringing out the more subtle and delicate flavours of the chocolate".

The cheapest chocolate out there only gets six hours of conching, that's a far cry from top artisan brands. Both IQ and The Chocolate Tree produce is made in small batches using artisan techniques and we are lucky enough to say that East Lothian's very own Willy Wonka will be speaking at our next Healthy Lifestyle Event in March. His Chocolate Tree café shop in Bruntsfield sounds well worth a visit if you can't wait till then. He is currently working on his own raw chocolate bar.

One of the big differences between your average newsagent chocolate bar and handmade artisan brands is the removal of cacao butter in place of cheap vegetable oils. Cacao butter is favoured by the beauty industry and often found in skin care products. Beware of cheap chocolate stating vegetable oils in the ingredients, it means the cacao butter has been sold on!

Candy, Diploma in Nutritional Healing