

Theo Chocolate

Who doesn't love chocolate? Bite sized M&Ms, the peanut buttery goodness of the Reeses cup, and of course, the classic Hershey's milk chocolate bar. The average American eats more than 11 pounds of chocolate a year. But where does that chocolate really come from? Were the cocoa beans picked by child labor in Africa? By workers with almost no pay in South America? Most companies don't even know. That's what makes Theo Chocolate unique. Founded in 2006 by Joseph Whinney, Theo Chocolate is changing the world, one cacao farm at a time.

Located at 3400 Phinney Avenue in Seattle Washington, this innovative little business is the only organic and Fair For Life certified chocolate company in the USA. Fair For Life is a company similar to the Fair Trade system that insures that products are environmentally friendly and that the companies have good business relationships with their producers (in this case, small cacao farmers). Fair For Life also makes sure that the workers and the cacao farmers are paid fairly and have the needed technological advances. They do this by sending trained and qualified auditors to audit both the factory and the cacao farms. This is quite a job for the auditors because Theo Chocolate gets its cocoa beans from many places including small farmers in the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Madagascar, Panama, Venezuela, and the Ivory Coast. Theo Chocolate also goes beyond even Fair For Life expectations, especially in technological advances for the cacao farmers. Its total score for Fair Trade issues is 60; the average is 44.

Surprisingly, Theo Chocolate's founder is named Joseph Whinney, not Theo. The name 'Theo' actually came from 'Theobroma Cacao' the cacao tree's Greek name. Joseph Whinney fell in love with 'Theobroma Cacao' and its beans while working with cacao growers in Central America and Africa. He realized cutting down the rain forests to grow cacao made both environmental problems and economic problems for the farmers. In 1994 Joe started bringing organic cocoa beans into the US. Later, in 2004 Joe moved to Seattle and with the help of Debra Music, Vice President of Sales and Marketing from Cambridge, went through a series of brain storming sessions on a houseboat in Lake Union. The outcome was Theo Chocolate. Theo Chocolate officially opened in 2006, and now opens its doors seven days a week for factory tours.

Theo Chocolate has impacted the world by making conditions better for cacao farmers. By buying beans from so many different places they've helped many families and communities. In some cases, Theo Chocolate has invested 5% above the Fair Trade premium in technological advances for the cacao growers. I think that in this way they are very important to many cacao producers.

Theo Chocolate is a small and innovative chocolate company with organic chocolate, free samples, and unusual flavors (they include mint, bread, and orange). Some of Theo Chocolate's chocolate can even be considered health food; any chocolate that is 70% cacao or more is considered a health food by the US government. Theo Chocolate chocolate is also purer than other kinds too. Their Jane Goodall Milk

Chocolate only has five ingredients; sugar, cacao beans, cocoa butter, and ground vanilla bean, while others may have chocolate liquor, vanillin, soy lecithin, or even wax. So, in my opinion, Theo Chocolate is a truly innovative chocolate company.

Bibliography

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