

At \$173 An Ounce, Is This The World's Most Expensive Chocolate?

Description



The current batch of Toak, made from rare Ecuadorian cacao beans, is 81% dark chocolate.

The Guinness World Record for the most valuable chocolate (MVC! MVC!) was set in 2001, when an anonymous buyer in a Christie's auction paid \$687 for a 4-inch-long Cadbury bar that had traveled with Captain Robert Scott on his first expedition to the Antarctic in the early 1900s. Then there are the chocolates that make wacky top 10 lists, bolstered with gold, diamonds or hand-delivery by 80s British pop singer Tony Hadley to send prices soaring into the thousands for a single truffle or bar.

But putting pageantry and auction prices aside, at \$260 for a roughly 1.5-ounce bar, new brand Toak may be the most expensive pure chocolate in the world. The ingredients: just cacao and cane sugar.

Toak began after Chicagoan Jerry Toth, now 36, moved to Ecuador in his 20s to help start a rainforest conservation organization. There, he met fourth-generation cacao grower Servio Pachard, who led him deep into the mountains to a patch of 100-plus-year-old Arriba cacao trees that are some of the last of their kind and produce some of the most coveted cacao beans in the world.

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Using these beans, Toth treats chocolate-making with the same care and precision that goes into bottling a fine wine, or distilling a small-batch whiskey.

After fermenting the beans—a time-consuming step that chocolate producers often skip—Toth and his partners dry, roast, de-shell and grind each batch by hand. It has taken them 2 years to make 574 bars, which are sold in individual wooden boxes filled with cacao bean husks and numbered by harvest.

Each Toak bar comes with a cacao bean in the center to remind you that chocolate comes from a tree—not a factory.



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The Big Question: How does Toâ€™ak taste?

I sampled a Toâ€™ak bar with Toth, who suggests breaking it along the lines while still in its gold wrapper, then using the wooden tweezers that come in each box to pick up a piece so the oils on your fingertips donâ€™t interfere with the taste. Instead of chewing, let the chocolate melt in the back of your mouth. The result: a rich, deep, pleasantly bitter flavor with surprisingly fruity undertonesâ€”though thereâ€™s no fruit added, the Arriba bean unleashes a natural sweetness Iâ€™ve never tasted in another chocolate.

â€œWeâ€™re trying to remind people that chocolate doesnâ€™t come from a factory,â€ Toth says. â€œIt comes from the land.â€

The vital stats: Toâ€™ak chocolate (\$260 for a 50-gram bar) went on sale this month; at press time, 380 bars are still available. Buy one [here](#).

[Marissa Conrad](#)

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