

Close-up of fermenting cacao seeds

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Close-up view of cacao seeds fermenting in a wooden bucket in Barlovento, Venezuela. The seeds come from cacao pods, which grow on the *Thebroma Cacao* tree. Fermentation, which converts the seeds' sugars into acids, is the first step in the process of making the seeds into cocoa. The fermentation process lasts from two to eight days and causes the seeds to develop their distinct cocoa flavor. The fermented seeds will later be dried in the sun, roasted, peeled, and ground.



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