



The Maya Nut (*Brosimum alicastrum*)

A rediscovered “super food” from the Selva Maya region

The Selva Maya

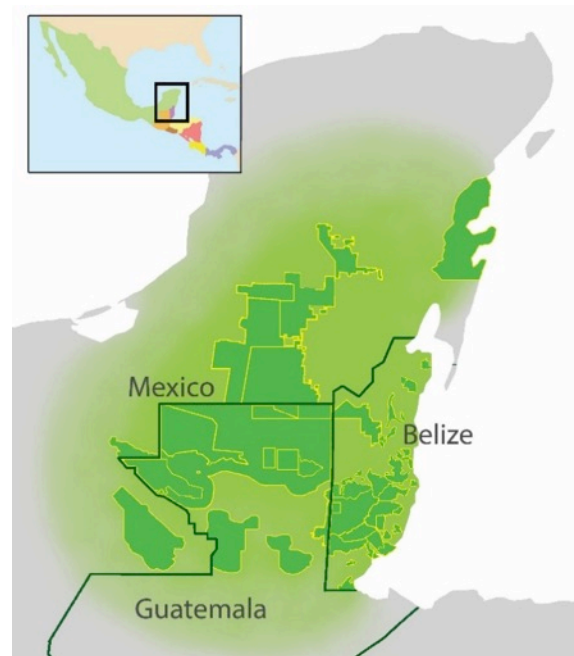
The Selva Maya is a tropical forest region extending over Belize, northern Guatemala and south-eastern Mexico. It covers an area of more than four million hectares of protected areas and is the most extensive tropical rainforest of Mesoamerica. The Selva Maya hosts an extraordinary biological diversity in over 20 different ecosystems.

However, the Selva Maya is exposed to extreme pressures that strongly compromise its short and long-term viability and operability. The main reasons are forest fires, illegal logging and exploitation of flora and fauna as well as unsustainable large and small-scale farming. In order to protect and conserve the Selva Maya it needs alternative income sources from the forest such as timber and non-timber forest products, one of them being the Maya Nut.

What? - The Maya Nut

The Maya Nut is the seed of the Breadnut tree (*Brosimum alicastrum*), which is native to the Selva Maya and occurs abundantly in the forests. The Breadnut tree is known as the “tree of life” for its nutritive properties of its seeds and leaves. It was already used in Pre-Columbian times for food and beverage production by the Mayans and is therefore of cultural importance and known as the Maya Nut.

The seed has a high content of minerals (e.g. calcium and iron), dietary fibre and protein. Additionally, it is gluten free. These nutrition properties and its unique nutty, chocolaty taste make the Maya Nut a very interesting food that can be consumed cooked or dried and ground to flour in any recipe instead of other flours, in cereals, teas and others.



Protected areas in the Selva Maya region

How? - Organic production initiatives

Nowadays, several Guatemalan and Mexican communities in the Selva Maya use the Maya Nut. They collect the seeds from the forests, which are then dried, roasted and ground to flour.

The community organizations sell the fresh and dried seeds, the flour, and cookies with the Maya Nut flour to the local, national and international market.



L. to r.: Uuxactun, a community in the Selva Maya, Guatemala & the Maya Nut

The use of the Maya Nut generates income derived from the forest for the local population in the Selva Maya and thereby motivates people to protect the forests. Moreover, the vast majority of people working with the Maya Nut are women, helping them to improve their livelihood.

The Maya Nut is collected in the forests from the ground when it naturally falls down, not causing any damage and within protected areas its recollection is regulated by a management plan and in some cases organically certified, according to international standards.



Women procesing the Maya Nut

The Selva Maya Programme, which is implemented on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is supporting local actors to protect and enhance the sustainable use of the Selva Maya, among others through strengthening the Maya Nut Value Chain.

For further information please contact giz.selvamaya@giz.de or visit www.selvamaya.info

Atole (hot beverage) with Maya Nut

Ingredients:

- 500 g Maya Nut Flour
- 1 Cinnamon stick
- 2 l Cold Water
- 1 l Milk
- Sugar or honey

Preparation:

- Roast the Maya Nut flour for 10 min
- Mix and dilute flour with cold water
- Pass it through a strainer
- Add cinnamon and boil it
- Add milk when it starts to boil
- Add sugar or honey as preferred
- Serve hot and enjoy!



Atole, a hot beverage made with Maya Nut

Editor

Selva Maya Programme
Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

1a calle y 3a avenida, zona 2
Santa Elena, Peten, Guatemala
T (+502) 7926-3715
E giz.selvamaya@giz.de
I www.giz.de
I www.selvamaya.info

Author(s)

Elena Baumanns & Saul George

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German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and
Development (BMZ)

BMZ Offices

Dahlmannstraße 4
53113 Bonn
T +49 (0)228 99 535-0
F +49 (0)228 99 535-3500

Stresemannstraße 94
10963 Berlin
T +49 (0)30 18 535-0
F +49 (0)30 18 535-2501

poststelle@bmz.bund.de
www.bmz.de