

Meet the team: Mercedes Ishim

Position: Cacao Selection Specialist
Village: San Felipe

Mercedes Ishim is a K'ekchi Maya woman with 9 children. Before starting with MMC in April 2012, she spent 8 years volunteering with Toledo Maya Womens Council training women in sewing. She loves to sew! She has used her sewing skills to create special microfermentation bags too. Mercedes is the last "control" point before cacao goes into the sacks for sale. She says she loves to sort cacao because she likes to work with the MMC team, and she takes pride in doing a great job making sure the cacao looks perfect before it goes into sacks. She picks everything that is not a perfect bean out! Also, happy birthday Mercedes (June 28)!!



MMC Participates in National Cacao Forum

Maya Mountain Cacao was honored to host more than 50 special guests and important stakeholders of the Belizean cacao industry at our Cacao House the morning of June 14th and then speak at the national forum held in Punta Gorda later that day. The Forum was attended by key stakeholders including the CEO of the Belize Ministry of Agriculture, Hon. Jose Alpuche, as well as representatives from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), CARDI, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the European Union, and more. Beyond MMC's facility, visits were also made to TCGA field officer's nursery and to Belcampo's chocolate factory. During the forum, stakeholders made a commitment to focusing on growth and collaboration in Belize's cacao industry. Special thanks to the U.S. Embassy for developing and promoting the event! The whole MMC team, in attendance, found it very productive, informative, and fun.



First successful export of 2013

During the closing days of May, MMC's team proudly conducted quality tests, verified packaging, and organized logistics in preparation for the first export of 2013. On May 28th, a container arrived at MMC's Cacao House from Belize City, which the MMC team then quickly and professionally lined with brown kraft paper (a requirement for export) and dutifully packed with 330 sacks of premium, certified organic cocoa beans for chocolate makers in the U.S. This shipment will be making its way into Belize origin chocolate bars from Mast Brothers Chocolate and Taza Chocolate, among others, and coming soon to online and in-store orders near you!



Thank you to 2013 season interns, Elma & Alexis!



Elma Paulauskaite, originally of Lithuania, came to MMC after a Frontier Market Scouts apprenticeship through the Monterey Institute for International Studies. She designed and launched MMC's Kiva partnership, led our team in meaningful business growth and leadership exercises, wrote a successful grant in collaboration with an MMC partner, and provided plenty of laughs. Alexis Grossman, originally of California, came to MMC after years of running direct trade importer Crop to Cup coffee in Brooklyn, where she managed their East Coast office and led quality improvement projects at origin. Alexis developed and implemented effective batch tracking programs at the Cacao House, including a one-of-its-kind tasting program that allows MMC to provide flavor/aroma notes on each individual batch and replicate our model in new places. These amazing women contributed so much to develop MMC into what it is today. From our whole team – THANK YOU, ELMA & ALEXIS!!