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Moonstruck helps revive rare South American chocolate

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By **Mike Rogoway**, *The Oregonian*[Follow](#)[Like](#) [87 people like this.](#)[Tweet](#) [33](#)[Share](#)[Share](#) [87](#)[Email](#)[Comment](#) [2](#)[Print](#)

A rare variety of chocolate bean, which vanished nearly 100 years ago in South America, returns this month to cafes around Portland.

Moonstruck Chocolate Co. has licensed the revived Pure Nacional cacao bean, recently rediscovered in Peru. The bean produced a fine chocolate enjoyed during the 19th century, but was thought lost to disease that afflicted its trees.

Now it's back, according to Portland-based Moonstruck, which plans to roll out its new chocolate in New York City today and in Portland next week.

"It's an intense chocolate, but low in acidity," said Julian Rose, Moonstruck's chocolatier.

"It's so refined and delicate," he said -- "full of flavor, and very floral. It feels less savage."

The bean was rediscovered almost by accident, according to Rose, growing at an elevation of 4,000 feet in a canyon in northern Peru. Testing linked it to the Pure Nacional variety, thought to be extinct.

It doesn't come cheap -- Moonstruck will sell 3.5 ounces of the beans, covered in chocolate, for about \$11. A 2-ounce bar made from the Pure Nacional chocolate sells for about \$8.



Moonstruck image

These chocolate-covered beans revive a 100-year-old flavor. They're rare, and don't come cheap -- \$11 for 3.5 ounces.

Note: This article has been revised with updated pricing from Moonstruck.

-- **Mike Rogoway**; twitter: [@rogoway](#); phone: 503-294-7699