



BUSINESS PROFILE



PURE CHOCOLATE JAMAICA
JAMAICA
[WEBSITE](#)

ABOUT PURE CHOCOLATE JAMAICA

- **Company status:** Limited.
- **Year of registration:** 2017.
- **Number of employees:** 5 staff of which 4 are female and all are under 35 years old.
- **Business sector:** Chocolate manufacturing.



Rennae Johnson and Wouter Tjeertes - Founders

The founders of Pure Chocolate Jamaica, Rennae Johnson and Wouter Tjeertes, wanted to develop a local product that has long been under-appreciated, cocoa. Rennae is a seasoned Jamaican pastry chef and Wouter has 3 decades of experience as executive pastry chef. With 20 years of experience in the chocolate world, they witnessed the dark side of the business, including underpaid cocoa farmers and child labour. This inspired them to create their own company. Pure Chocolate Jamaica purchases cocoa beans from local farmers and creates 100% Jamaican hand-made chocolate.

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CONTEXT

Background

The climate of Jamaica provides a quality land needed to grow exceptional cocoa. Pure Chocolate Jamaica uses organically grown, single origin beans that are a mix of Criollo and Trinitario varieties, sourced directly from the John Crow Mountains, overlooking the Blue Mountains. The global International Cocoa Organization rates the beans grown in Jamaica as “fine flavour”, a title given only to those countries that

produce beans of exceptional quality. Due to the island’s unique soil and conditions, the beans develop a distinctive flavour. The beans are fermented and dried by hand, following an expert process that has been designed to stay as close to the extraordinary cocoa taste of the original beans, bringing out their exceptional flavour.



Funded by
the European Union

Relationships with the community

For Pure Chocolate Jamaica, everything must start with the highest quality beans, and an appreciation for the farmers. They are committed to direct trade, working closely with their farming partners and regularly meeting to share newfound knowledge that benefits both parties. By directly paying their farmers a premium for their best beans, the company motivates them to

grow the best crops possible. Better crops mean better chocolate, and in turn better communities. The company's dedication and deep involvement into every step of the way is something only a few chocolate makers do. While it adds complications, costs and financial risk, it is the only way to produce fair chocolate.



Mr. Bodie holding fresh cocoa pods.



Mr. Johnson, fermenting cocoa beans.

PRODUCTS AND MARKET

Main products

Pure Chocolate Jamaica sells a variety of chocolate bars, milk and dark, with different flavours, as well as a chocolate snack.

Main markets

The company sells its products in different outlets including retail store, restaurant, coffee shop, gift boxes or local market, in both Jamaica and the Netherlands.

Certifications

Even though the farmers grow their cocoa beans organically, they are not certified organic. Due to the remote location of the farms, becoming certified is expensive. Moreover, whilst the cocoa crop grow organically, farmers might still use some fertilizers or pesticides on their other crops, which disqualifies them from receiving organic certification.



Dark Milk chocolate with coconut



Dark chocolate with coffee



Dark chocolate



Dark chocolate with cinnamon



Dark chocolate with lemongrass



Snackables – dark chocolate, almond, speculoos

INNOVATIONS: MILESTONES AND EXPANSION PLANS

Pure Chocolate Jamaica provides a canvas for young professional artists to promote their art to the world. In January 2017, the company started working with Taj Francis, a Jamaican born visual artist with a diverse range of expressions, mainly focused on illustration. Being a multifaceted talent, his work spans various forms such as paintings, digital art, murals and video art or animation. Through these mediums, his pieces explore the subtle nuances of human behaviour and identity, specifically relating to African ancestry. His artwork is featured on the product's packaging.

Furthermore, aligned with their inclusive and holistic approach to making and selling chocolate, Pure Chocolate Company proposes a workshop and

tasting. It is a 2-hour workshop in which people can learn all the basics of making chocolate, a sensory tasting session or chocolate pairings.

The company also innovates in collaboration with other local businesses. In 2022, Worthy Park Estate's pot-still aged rum range was paired with Pure Chocolate Jamaica's artisanal chocolate for the 'Pot-still and Pods' seminar at the Jamaica Rum Festival. Five pot-still distilled rum products were paired with five varying flavours of premium hand-made chocolate, and guests experienced a carefully curated tasting exercise.



Pure Chocolate Jamaica and Worthy Park's pot-still aged rum at The Jamaica Rum Festival 'Pot-still and Pods' seminar.



Pure Chocolate Jamaica's workshop.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Pure Chocolate Company received some support over the years. As such, the company was a participant in the 2021 Scotiabank Vision Achiever programme, a 17-week training in sales, systemizing business processes, marketing and understanding business financials. The company successfully implemented some of the strategies learnt from the programme, and they are already reaping the benefits.

Moreover, during Covid, the company received support from the International Trade Centre, which helped them access the regional market. Their business relies heavily on tourism, and during the pandemic, tourism experienced a significant decline.

The company has achieved notable successes. In 2023, the company received the Cacao of Excellence gold award, which empowers smallholder cacao producers around the world. In 2023, eight of Pure Chocolate Company's chocolate bars were awarded gold, silver or bronze, by the Academy of Chocolate, an independent membership body that promotes real chocolate. In 2021, three chocolate bars were awarded bronze and gold.

In 2022, Pure Chocolate Company received the UNIA Marcus Garvey Awards for Agriculture. This award recognizes ordinary Jamaican doing extra ordinary things, in categories ranging from Agriculture and Arts to Trade and Business.



The founders with their Cacao of Excellence gold award.



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