

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A process for producing a dark, natural cocoa, comprising:
 - 5 mixing a cocoa product selected from the group consisting of cocoa nibs, cocoa beans, and a combination thereof with water;
 - heating the cocoa product and the water to a temperature of at least 85°C, wherein a moisture content of the cocoa product after heating is from about 35% to about 40%;
 - drying the cocoa product after heating; and
 - 10 grinding the cocoa product after drying, thus producing cocoa liquor;wherein the cocoa product is not alkalized during the process of producing the cocoa liquor and wherein the cocoa product after grinding has color coordinates according to CIE 1976 color standards of an L-value of between about 9 and about 26, a C-value of between about 14 and about 29, and an H-value of between about 40 and about 57.
- 15 2. The process of claim 1, further comprising pressing the cocoa liquor, thus producing cocoa cake and cocoa butter.
3. The process of claim 2, further comprising grinding the cocoa cake into a powder.
4. The process of claim 1 or claim 2, further comprising subjecting the cocoa product and the water to an elevated pressure of at least 50 kPa (0.5 bar).
- 20 5. The process of claim 4, wherein the cocoa product and the water are subjected to the elevated pressure for a time of between greater than 0 and about 300 minutes.
6. The process of claim 4, wherein the cocoa product and the water are subjected to the elevated pressure for a time of between about 30 and about 240 minutes.
7. The process of claim 4, wherein the elevated pressure is between about 50 and
- 25 400 kPa (0.5 and 4 bar).
8. The process of claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the cocoa product and the water are heated to a temperature of between about 90°C and 130°C.
9. The process of claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the cocoa product and the water are heated to a temperature of between about 90°C and 120°C.
- 30 10. The process of claim 1 or claim 2, further comprising sterilizing the cocoa product.
11. The process of claim 10, wherein the sterilizing occurs under pressure.
12. The process of claim 1 or claim 2, wherein drying the cocoa product comprises jet roasting the cocoa product.

13. The process of claim 1, further comprising reducing the temperature of the cocoa product and the water heated to the at least 85°C by at least 10°C.

14. The process of claim 13, further comprising heating the cocoa product and the water to at least 85°C a second time.

5 15. The process of claim 14, further comprising reducing the temperature of the cocoa product and the water heated to the at least 85°C by at least 10°C a second time.

16. The process of claim 4, further comprising reducing the pressure of at least 50 kPa (0.5 bar) to atmospheric pressure.

10 17. The process of claim 16, further comprising subjecting the cocoa product and the water to the pressure of at least 50 kPa (0.5 bar) a second time.

18. The process of claim 17, further comprising reducing the pressure of at least 50 kPa (0.5 bar) to atmospheric pressure a second time.

19. A natural cocoa obtained by the method of any one of claims 1-18 wherein the natural cocoa product has a pH of less than about 6.

15 20. The natural cocoa product of claim 19, wherein the pH is between about 5.0 and about 6.0.

21. The natural cocoa product of claim 19 or 20, wherein the cocoa product is a cocoa powder.

20 22. The natural cocoa product of claim 21, wherein the powder has a fineness of at least 98% of the cocoa powder passing through a 200 mesh screen.

23. The natural cocoa product of claim 19 or 20, wherein the cocoa product is cocoa liquor.

25 24. The natural cocoa product of claim 23, wherein the cocoa liquor has a C-value of between about 15 and about 28, an H-value of between about 40 and about 55, or a combination thereof.

25 25. The natural, cocoa product of claim 19 or 20, wherein the natural, cocoa product has an H value of between about 40 and about 45.

26. The natural, cocoa product of claim 19 or 20, wherein the natural, cocoa product has an H value of between about 45 and about 55.