

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2025

WEDNESDAY 5TH - FRIDAY 7TH FEBRUARY 2025

BEURS VAN BERLAGE, AMSTERDAM



**The Chocolate Makers' Forum is not just an event;
it's a melting pot of ideas, innovation and collaboration.**

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INTRODUCTION

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2025

Chocoa 2025: Chocolate Makers Forum

Dates: February 5-7, 2025

Craft Chocolate Evolution: Navigating Crisis, Compliance, and New Opportunities in Tourism, Marketing, and Private Labels

The Chocolate Makers Forum 2025 at Chocoa brings together industry professionals, chocolate makers, and experts to discuss the latest challenges and opportunities in the world of craft chocolate. With panels featuring expert speakers and interactive sessions designed to provide practical tools and insights, this year's forum will focus on topics essential to driving sustainability and maintaining quality and flavour standards in the craft chocolate and cocoa industry.

Join us for three days of learning, networking, and discovery!

Day 1: Wednesday 5th February 2025

| Time | Session | Title |
|---------------|----------------------|---|
| 15:30 – 17:00 | Opening & Networking | From Bean to Brand: Building a Successful Craft Chocolate Private Label |
| 17:00 – 19:00 | | Networking Receptions |

Day 2: Thursday 6th February 2025

| Time | Session | Title |
|---------------|-----------------|--|
| 13:00 – 14:15 | 1 - Panel | Navigating EUDR: Practical Steps for Compliance |
| 14:30 - 15:30 | 2 - Interactive | Social Media For Craft Chocolate Makers by The Chocolate Journalist |
| 16:00 - 17:30 | 3 - Panel | The Quality and Flavour Crisis: Bridging Cocoa Production and Chocolate Making |

Day 3: Friday 7th February 2025

| Time | Session | Title |
|---------------|-----------------|---|
| 13:30 - 15:00 | 4 - Interactive | Expand Your Craft Chocolate Brand in Europe: Retailer and Distribution Insights |
| 15:30 - 17:30 | 5 - Panel | Tourism with a Taste: Leveraging Sustainable Cocoa and Chocolate Tourism |

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DAY 1: Wednesday 5th February

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2025

15:30 **Private Label Session – “From Bean to Brand: Building a Successful Craft Chocolate Private Label ”**

Location: Grote zaal, Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam

This session will kick off with Laurence Koutny a powerhouse in the chocolate industry with over 17 years of experience working with brands like Godiva, Mars, and Ommom. She will bring insights into mega trends and Private and White Label worlds. As the founder of Art of Chocolate, Laurence specializes in innovation, product strategy, and Consulting.

Ricardo Trillos, co-founder of Cao Chocolates and Business Consultant at The Choconnector, will follow for a focused session tailored to craft chocolate makers interested in entering the world of private label production. With over 15 years of experience in bean-to-bar chocolate making and consulting, Ricardo will guide attendees through the essentials of building a successful private label line, including market insights, key requirements like consistency, packaging, and licensing, and strategies for attracting and managing clients while maintaining top-tier quality.

Hugo Hermelink will close the session providing a compelling testimony of his journey, including the challenges and rewards of going from cocoa production to building a chocolate factory in Costa Rica and thriving in his family business including their journey into private label.

This session covers the benefits, challenges, and common pitfalls of private label production, helping makers understand the demands of scaling, the importance of pricing and contracts, and how to develop a brand that stands out.

After the session, attendees will have the opportunity to chat with Ricardo during the reception or book a 1:1 consultation to dive deeper into their specific questions and goals.

Moderator: Caroline Lubbers, co-founder of Chocoo

Speakers: Ricardo Trillos, The Choconnector,
Laurence Koutny, The Art of Chocolate
Hugo Hermelink, Chocolate del Caribe

17:00 **Networking Receptions - for Continued Collaboration**

Location: Graanbeurszaal (1), Verveij Kamer room (2), Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam

Chocolate Makers Forum ticket holders are invited to have a drink and continue networking at one of two receptions:

- A reception in partnership with IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative, held in the Graanbeurszaal.
- The Pacific Invest Exporters meeting, in the Verveij Kamer room—the same venue as the Private Label Session.

Both events are open from Chocolate Maker Forum attendees to connect, share ideas, and strengthen relationships with industry peers. These gatherings are the perfect opportunity to continue the momentum from the Private Label session, paving the way for meaningful collaborations and conversations throughout the week.

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DAY 2: Thursday 6th February

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2025

Location: Berlagezaal, Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam

13:00 **Session 1:** EUDR - Navigating the EUDR, Practical Steps for Compliance

This session will guide chocolate makers and cocoa supply chain stakeholders through the EU's Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and its traceability requirements. The session begins with a panel discussion featuring industry experts on the role of competent authorities, useful compliance tools, and the story from an experienced cocoa trader. Following the panel, participants will break into focused groups, moderated by industry experts, for deeper discussion on key compliance topics: readiness assessment, identifying remaining compliance gaps, and determining partners, tools, and resources needed for full compliance. These sessions will provide actionable insights to support strategic planning and successful EUDR integration.

Moderator: Jack Steijn, co-founder of Chocoo

14:30 **Session 2:** "Social Media For Craft Chocolate Makers by The Chocolate Journalist"

Led by industry expert Sharon Terenzi, also known as The Chocolate Journalist, this interactive session equips craft chocolate makers with the insights and tools they need to thrive on social media. With her extensive knowledge of the chocolate industry and a passion for sharing craft chocolate knowledge, Sharon has built a loyal following by sharing the best of what the craft world has to offer. In today's digital landscape, a strong social media presence is essential for growing a brand and engaging customers, and Sharon's expertise makes her the ideal guide for enhancing social media impact. This session will dive into proven strategies for effectively showcasing your chocolate's unique story, building a loyal audience, and maximizing reach. She'll cover headache-free content strategies for any chocolate maker. How to use what you've already got to stand out, connect with your audience and see how this can impact your sales. As well as how to use your social media presence to network and strengthen business relationships.

Moderator: Veronique Mbida, Founder of Bantu Chocolate

Speaker: Sharon Terenzi, The Chocolate Journalist

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DAY 2: Thursday 6th February

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2025

Location: Berlagezaal, Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam

16:00 **Session 3:** The Flavour Crisis: Bridging Cocoa Production and Chocolate Making

In craft chocolate and cocoa, quality can be seen through two distinct lenses: flavour and production. For chocolate makers, quality can mean crafting exceptional, flavourful products that stand out in an increasingly competitive market. For cocoa producers, it can mean sustainable practices, ethical work structure, and ensuring that the beans grown are of the highest possible standard to meet the demands of premium chocolate brands. But what happens when these two definitions of quality come under pressure?

This panel will explore the “flavour crisis” facing the craft chocolate world today, diving into how global challenges—from climate change to supply and demand disruptions—are affecting both the flavour and the sourcing of cocoa. With rising costs, political instability, and environmental strain, how can chocolate makers and cocoa producers ensure consistent, high-quality products? We’ll discuss how both sides of the supply chain—cocoa growers and chocolate makers—can redefine what “quality” means today. How do cocoa producers balance sustainability with bean quality, and how can chocolate makers adapt to ensure complex, differentiated flavours while navigating cost pressures?

Topics

- The flavour crisis in craft chocolate
- Defining quality from both sides for cocoa producers and chocolate makers
- Sustainable sourcing vs. flavour complexity
- How to communicate quality to discerning consumers

Moderator: María Jiménez Rojas, Fine Flavour Cacao Specialist at Daarnhouwer

Co-moderator: Julien Simonis, Programme Manager of Cacao of Excellence

Speakers: Leslie Agyare, Three Mountains Cocoa
Ryan Berk, Parliament Chocolate & Thai Cacao
Zoi Papalexandratou, Zoto
Alexis de Boisset, Belco

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DAY 3: Friday 7th February

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13:30 **Session 4: Distributors** – "Expand Your Craft Chocolate Brand in Europe: Retailer and Distribution Insights"

In this session, craft chocolate makers will hear directly from retailers and gain a comprehensive understanding of the European distribution landscape. Learn how to position your brand for success in key markets such as Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and the UK. Discover what retailers look for in craft chocolate products, from standout packaging and consistent quality to aligning with market trends. This is your chance to refine your pitch, ask questions, understand the distribution process, and establish relationships that could expand their market reach. Take the next steps in growing your craft chocolate reach in Europe!

- Topics**
- Distributor selection criteria: What they want from chocolate makers
 - How to prepare your product for distribution: Packaging, quality, and trends
 - Market demands and consumer preferences in the craft chocolate space
 - Tips for building lasting partnerships with retailers and navigating the distributions process effectively

Moderator: Ashley Parasram, Trinidad and Tobago Fine Cocoa Company Limited (TTFCC)

Co-moderator: Michal Herufek, Herufek Chocolate

Speakers: Spencer Hyman, Cocoa Runners
Victoria De La Torre, El Club del Chocolate
Michaela Schupp, Chocolats-de-luxe
Maartje Van den Berg, ClearChox

15:30 **Session 5: Panel** – "Tourism with a Taste: Leveraging Sustainable Cocoa Tourism"

As the craft chocolate industry evolves and seeks for creative ways to diversify its income, cocoa and chocolate tourism are emerging as exciting frontiers. This panel will dive into how both the cocoa producing side and craft chocolate makers can turn tourism into a thriving, sustainable revenue stream. Imagine offering visitors immersive experiences—cocoa plantation tours, hands-on chocolate-making workshops, guided tastings, and unforgettable culinary adventures. Tourism not only elevates the appeal of chocolate but also strengthens the identity of the people and places behind it.

Learn how tourism can create a ripple effect of positive impact across the cocoa supply chain—empowering farmers, supporting chocolate artisans during market shifts, and fostering sustainable practices. With a growing demand for authentic, quality-driven travel experiences, this discussion will show how taking visitors behind the scenes can cultivate deeper connections to bean-to-bar chocolate and drive long-term success.

- Topics**
- How sustainable tourism supports local economies
 - Case studies: Successful integration of tourism into cocoa plantations and craft chocolate companies
 - Marketing and branding benefits of chocolate tourism
 - Engaging visitors through farm-to-bar experiences and chocolate tastings

Moderator: Amora Carbajal, World Cocoa Tourism Network

Co-moderator: Andrea Montoya, World Cocoa Tourism Network

Speakers: Albert Sánchez Gamboa, Cacao of Excellence Costa Rica
Julia Zotter, Zotter Schokolade
An-Chi Chu Urocissa and Fu Wan Chocolates
Jorrit Consten DARQ Maastricht Hotel
Luis A. Llanos, Agromercado

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