

ABSTRACT

The influence of processing location, growing environment and pollen donor effects on the flavour and quality of selected cacao (*Theobroma cacao* L.) genotypes

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This study examined the influence of different processing locations, growing environments and pollen donor effects on the flavour and other quality attributes of cocoa (*Theobroma cacao* L.). These factors were investigated via three experiments. The first two experiments were conducted over three growing seasons and the pollen donor study was conducted over two growing seasons. The first experiment examined the possible influence of three different locations for sweat box fermentations with sun drying, on the flavour of six different cocoa accessions, each harvested from the same field. The second experiment looked at the possible influence of four different growing environments on seven cocoa clones grown in at least two of four locations. The third experiment investigated pollen donor effects on flavour by conducting controlled pollinations with five accessions according to a diallel mating design. Processing location and growing environment effects on the organoleptic attributes of selected cacao genotypes were demonstrated with supporting near infrared reflectance spectroscopy (NIRS) results. Additionally, the strong contribution of cacao genotype to flavour, especially in floral flavour

attributes, was demonstrated. This superseded the combined effects of growing and processing environments in some instances. The results from the pollen donor study failed to detect xenia effects for most of the important flavour attributes viz cocoa flavour, acidity, fruitiness and floral flavour. There were small pollen donor effects on astringency, nutty and ‘other’ flavours. This contrasted with the strong female parent effects observed for most flavours and bean weight. The organoleptic results further supported the successful application of an optimised assessment protocol for training a sensory panel to systematically investigate some of the factors that can affect final flavour and quality in cocoa. The relative contribution of all elements of the growing and processing environment to final flavour in cocoa permits possible consideration of applying the concept “*terroir*”, already well established for wines, to cocoa.

Keywords: *Darin Ashram Sukha; processing location; growing environment; pollen donor; sensory evaluation; cocoa flavour.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the guidance and support received from my Supervisors: Drs. Edward Comissiong (Food Science and Technology Unit, Department of Chemical Engineering, UWI, St Augustine), David Butler (Cocoa Research Unit, UWI, St Augustine) and Prof. Pathmanathan Umaharan (Department of Life Sciences, Faculty of Science and Agriculture, UWI, St Augustine) during the course of this study. Special thanks to Dr. David Butler for his tireless, support, enthusiasm and guidance both as a Supervisor and Head, Cocoa Research Unit. Thanks must also be expressed to Prof. John Spence (former Head, Cocoa Research Unit) for introducing me to the fascinating world of cocoa research. I wish to also acknowledge the support received from the Food Science and Technology Unit and the Faculty of Science and Agriculture

The financial support, assistance and collaboration of The Ministry of Agriculture Land and Marine Resources (Trinidad and Tobago); The United Nations Common Fund for Commodities; Guittard Chocolate Company (USA); Lindt & Sprüngli International AG (Switzerland); Masterfoods (UK); Nestlé Product Technology Centre, (UK); Cadbury Schweppes plc. (UK), Paul Manickchand Estates Ltd. (Trinidad), Produce Marketing Associates Ltd. (Trinidad) and the staff at the San Juan Estate (Trinidad) are gratefully acknowledged in this study.

I also wish to especially thank Mr. Bruce Lauckner of the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI, Trinidad) for his patience and taking time out from his busy schedule to offer statistical advice and to thank all sensory panellists without whose palettes and serious dedication to organoleptic evaluation, this work would not have been possible.

Thanks also to Fabrice Davrieux and Sophie Assemet for conducting the near infrared reflectance spectroscopy (NIRS) evaluations at the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD) Montpellier, France.

Finally, special thanks to all family members and especially my wife, for her patience, understanding and support through my highs and lows, as well as for her critical honesty in our many discussions about this work. This would not be possible without you by my side and I am blessed to have you.

Thanks to God Almighty for walking by my side, carrying me when I needed support and for giving me courage to meet the challenges of this study.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the people who believed in me to give of their time, resources and of themselves, in more ways than can be mentioned, to the fruition of this body of research. This could not have been done without their support. This thesis is also dedicated to the memory of the late Dr. John F. Clapperton whose inspiration led me to follow this path.