



## RAISING THE BAR

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Based in Utah, The Chocolate Conspiracy is plotting to get connoisseurs hooked on its raw cacao and honey products

[www.eatchocolateconspiracy.com](http://www.eatchocolateconspiracy.com)

The first thing that newcomers to The Chocolate Conspiracy's products remark upon is the texture of the chocolate. "We sweeten it with honey," says AJ Wentworth, founder and co-owner of the company, "so it has a softer, fudgier, and more delicate texture than other chocolates. If the Mayans and the Aztecs ever used a sweetener, they used honey. It's nature's only natural, unprocessed sweetener."

The Chocolate Conspiracy, based in Salt Lake City, Utah, also owes its singular flavors to the use of raw, unroasted cacao beans, sourced from the Ucayali region of Peru. "The beans we use have a kind of green banana taste and a nice, nutty finish," says Steve Ohlson, co-owner and manager. "Not roasting the cacao results in fruity, tannic notes." All products are sweetened with a blend of raw, unfiltered honey, made locally in Utah. "The bees pollinate wild flowers and unsprayed fruit orchards," says AJ. "This gives the honey a special fragrance."

AJ founded the business in 2009, after training as a raw chef. In 2013, Steve became joint owner and took charge of the business side, bringing his retail experience to bear.

The Chocolate Conspiracy uses cacao produced on Peruvian farms where everything is organic, fair trade, and certified kosher. "It's a cooperative with hundreds of members, including many families," says Steve, "and we are happy that the farmers receive well above the average price."

The company produces in the region of 4,000 bars a month, and also makes a range of truffles, peanut butter cups, drinking chocolate, and more. "The store is unlike any other," says Steve, "as it's also our factory, and we only open for three days a week. Customers are tempted by the aroma of chocolate wafting through from the open kitchen, and can watch as our staff roll truffles, hand-wrap the bars, and make drinks."

While AJ was looking to create an old English feel on the packaging and wrappers, he was delighted to happen upon exactly the images he wanted in a 19th-century book of poems by Walter Crane entitled *A Floral Fantasy In an Old English Garden*. These designs conspired to lend an understated elegance to the products, which, in league with the subtle flavors of the chocolate, represent the height of good taste.