

WWW.THEMONITOR.COM/LIFE



PHOTOS BY NATHAN LAMBRECHT | NLAMBRECHT@THEMONITOR.COM
Eddie Benavidez’ Ceda Chocolate bars sits in a bowl of cacao beans at his workshop in Pharr.

BEAN-TO-BAR CHOCOLATE

Edinburg artisan creates organic chocolate from scratch

BY AMY NICHOL SMITH
THE MONITOR

Sniff. Break. Rub. Taste. That’s the proper way to taste chocolate, anyway, and the best way to identify the specific qualities in artisan chocolate like Ceda Chocolate.

Then again, Eddie Benavidez, the chocolate maker, has no problem with customers just eating it. Or baking with it. He likes to make brownies and fudge with his single-origin chocolate that he creates in his Edinburg shop which is closed to the public.

The 48-year-old starts with cacao beans which have been fermented and dried, and then shipped from Ecuador.

“I’m what’s known as a bean-to-bar chocolate maker,” he said. “So I go from the cacao bean to the actual chocolate bar, and I do all the processes in between.”

When he receives a shipment of cacao beans, Benavidez pours them into a makeshift sieve in order to sift through them and remove twigs, pebbles and dirt.

Once he’s shaken most of the dust off, he prepares a small roaster.

“This is a coffee roaster,” he said,

- FIND OUT MORE:**
For more information on Ceda Chocolate, visit www.cedachocolate.com.
- WHERE YOU CAN GET IT:**
Grow’n Growers Farmers Market
WHEN: 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Saturdays
WHERE: Town Lake at Firemen’s Park, 201 N. 1st St., McAllen
- The Market @ McAllen**
WHEN: 10am to 1 p.m. Saturdays
WHERE: McAllen Public Library, 4001 N. 23rd St., McAllen
- Harlingen’s Farmers Market**
WHEN: 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturdays
WHERE: “A” Street, between Jackson and Monroe Streets, Harlingen
- South Padre Island Farmers Market**
WHEN: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sundays
WHERE: The Shores, 8605 Padre Blvd., SPI



Eddie Benavidez holds up cacao beans that he imports from Ecuador to make his chocolate.



Benavidez uses a screen to separate cacao beans from their shells after receiving the raw product from Ecuador. The cacao is then roasted and ground into chunks.



Benavidez uses a machine he created to separate cacao shells from their useful interior after they have been ground into chunks.



See **CHOCOLATE** | 3D

COMMENTARY

Carolyn O’Neil

Map out your meal to avoid menu mishap

You may have heard advice to dine out less often if you want to weigh less. That’s like telling people to leave their cars in the garage if they want to avoid getting into an automobile wreck.

To improve highway safety, we need driver’s education. Diners’ education can help avoid menu mishaps.

Menus are maps

Read the menu and listen carefully when servers list the specials. Check out the menu online to help you plan a safe route. If you want to splurge on the fried calamari, choose a grilled entree. If you love sweets, ask to see the dessert menu first so you know where you’re headed.

Signal your moves

Be specific about what you want or don’t want. For example, “May I have more lemon slices?,” “Can you lightly brush the fish with butter?”

Keep your eyes open

Look around and see what other diners are eating so you get a visual on portion sizes. Way too large? Split the entree or plan to box up half for carryout.

Note road hazards

The fresh baked bread can be hard to resist. Ditto the bowl of olive oil. Did you know that olive oil and butter have the same number of calories? And dipping bread in olive oil can soak up more fat than a thin spread of butter.

Mixed green salads are a great starter, but watch out for goat cheese, blue cheese, cheddar cheese and sugar-glazed nuts that can add hundreds of calories.

Look for alternative routes

Be honest when the server asks you how you like your meal. They want to work fast to make you happy. Is the snapper still swimming in butter? Don’t suffer in silence. Send it back.

Control that sports car

Cheering on the Atlanta Braves at the stadium? Avoid driving up calorie scores. The Dixie Dog, a half-pound of frankfurter that’s flash-fried and topped with pulled pork barbecue, low-country mustard, barbecue sauce, pickles and creamy Southern slaw, has about 1,277 calories, 98 grams of fat and 2,280 milligrams of sodium.

Enjoy the ride

Make dining out a special occasion and enjoy the conversation and the entertainment as much as the food.

Distributed by

MCT Information Services