



Sofia Colmenares: [00:00:05] Well, thank you for being with me today, you know, being so busy in the past two weeks, I appreciate you finding the time to meet me and tell me about your experience.

Tavel Bristol-Joseph: Alright, thank you very much.

SC: Yes, that is exactly [00:00:20] what I want to focus on at first, your personal experience and your professional experience. So, when I was preparing for this interview, I was reading about where you studied and where you started working in kitchens. And [00:00:35] I found out that you were studying at the New York restaurant school.

TBJ: Yes, yes.

SC: And at this point you had decided to pursue a career in the pastry kitchen, I'm curious, at that point, [00:00:50] when you were just starting, where you curious about the origin of the chocolate that you were using in the kitchen and the methods that were employed to produce it, did you know anything at all about how chocolate was made?

TBJ:[00:01:06] No, actually, so my journey in the restaurant industry started out a little bit different than most, it started from just having the opportunity to cook and please [00:01:21] people, basically, hospitality more than anything else. I use food as a vessel to get to where I wanted to be. But the whole goal for me was hospitality. And, pastry was honestly just because I have a sweet [00:01:36] tooth and I love making sweet stuff. Also my aunt used to, she used to have me baking with her every Saturday for the Sunday school so I was always involved with baking [00:01:51] since, from a young age, when I got to America because I was born in South America, Georgetown Guyana. And when I got to America, I went to, I moved to Brooklyn and I went to New York restaurant school. And [00:02:06] throughout that time, my journey was basically starting over a new life because you're coming from South America into this new, into North American culture. So as much as I was going to school [00:02:21] at that time and learning and happy about being part of this culture. I also had a lot of things outside of school and outside of my career, more personal things that I was working on that to me was more important [00:02:36] than what I was doing in school, because cooking came natural to me. And so, honestly, by and when you're going to school and going through all the different jobs, where [00:02:51] after leaving school, it never really dawned on me. Like, I knew the basics, but it never really dawned on me. Like, can I know more about this ingredient because we use it so much and it's probably the number one flavor [00:03:06] in the world. How do we, how do I not know enough about this? And when I was, I used all the, all the other chocolate companies, but when I was in Austin, and we [00:03:21] opened up our first restaurant here at Emmer and Rye,



that's when a woman by the name of Jodi, she came in for dinner, she was sitting at the Chef's counter, and she basically told me about [00:03:36] Luker chocolate and how interesting it is and and, and how, you know, so much their focus on sustainability and helping the community and Colombia, and it just sounded like the ethos of that company [00:03:51] paired, well with the ethos of my organization. And I, that's when I walked was like, well, I thought I knew what I'd name. But I actually want to go a little bit more in-depth now and that [00:04:06] was in, I believe 2019.

SC: Okay. So then, would you say that up until this moment, when Jodi came to the chef's table and started telling you about Luker, [00:04:23] do you think that your knowledge about chocolate and how it was produced was still that of what you learned in pastry school and you hadn't really dived into what was behind the chocolate that you were receiving at the restaurant?

TBJ: Exactly. [00:04:38] It was the very basic, because in school I think, I think we have like one or two classes on top, you know? I mean the process is so fast so there's no, unless you have a personal passion for chocolate, [00:04:54] you, you weren't digging that deep and for my experience, like, I didn't get introduced to chocolate until I was eating like candy bars, right? But you never even think about the chocolate you think about flavors. [00:05:10] I didn't really fully start working with chocolate until I came to America. So I was 18, 19, when I actually touched chocolate.

SC: Okay, so up until that point before [00:05:25] you, you met Jodi, how were you deciding what chocolate you were employing in your kitchens, was it purely a flavor decision, a quality decision. What was guiding your selection?

TBJ: Yeah, it was definitely [00:05:40] a flavor decision. It was a meltability decision, it was a texture decision, whatever, whatever the application was, the best chocolate for that application. So molded [00:05:55] chocolate it was, which was, which is bonbons, was a different chocolate because it melts better, and then when I wanted more flavor, I would get a different, you know, try to find something different. So it was never a connection [00:06:10] to a brand, it was all based on how I felt the flavor profile would work with the desserts I was making.

SC: Okay and then after you, you met Jodi and you started diving deeper into what's behind the chocolate, [00:06:25] how has your decision on what chocolate am I going to employ changed?

TBJ: Yeah, I mean, it's it got way deeper for me, right? Because I believe that it's the saying in hospitality and in any business, people [00:06:40] don't buy what you have, they buy why you have it. And I started to kind of question a lot of things of why, why this is the way it is and I think that sometimes it's easy for us as chefs to kind [00:06:55] of, if you have the best of something,



it's easy to create, right? Because it's the best of that thing. And I wanted to kind of view the world different, I wanted to change the way the food culture was viewed and I wanted to [00:07:10] change the way I operated within it. And because of that, I wanted to align myself with people that have the same ethos. So I, my perspective, changed from just the flavor and the texture to the [00:07:25] story to the why and that's when I kind of made a shift. And to be sure that I want to work with because I wanted to get a little bit more focused about what I am doing. [00:07:40] And the message that I want to represent.

SC: And did you find this shift at all challenging to work with this producer that aligns with your ethos and your story?

TBJ: It wasn't that challenging, I thought it was going to be harder. But [00:07:55] honestly, the product was so much, it's kind of like, I'll use this as an example. It's kind of like eating fresh milled grains, it's kind of like eating white bread all your life and then you finally get this bread that is like made with fresh milled grains [00:08:10] and you're like, wow, the flavor is so much better, but if I had tried this fresh, without knowing it was fresh, no, I would have said something is wrong with this bread. It's, it has too much texture [00:08:25] because I didn't, I wouldn't know what I'm tasting, but that fact that I know now what I'm tasting, my flavor palate I would say just expanded to this new [00:08:40] space where I was able to be more receptive to things that I wasn't normally looking for, if that makes any sense. So it's not like a yes or no, it's an expansion of [00:08:55] flavor palate.

SC: Got it. And so we're talking about trying to align your story and your ethos with the producer. And at this point you're thinking about Luker chocolate, right? The, the company that Jodi had mentioned when, when [00:09:10] you met, but I'm curious, so you you're starting to build this relationship with this company and you, you are aware that, you know, as a pastry chef in a country that if we don't necessarily include [00:09:25] Hawaiian, it does not produce cacao, right. So what, what is your relationship like with cacao producers? Is it a relationship that is bridged through your relationship with Luker? Do you have the ability to [00:09:40] interact with them in any way?

TBJ: Yeah, so I, so my relationship basically got closer. So after I found out about Luker and what they stand for I said okay, this sounds fantastic, but I [00:09:55] want to go deeper. I'm that person that I, it's like, okay, let me know, you brought these samples in, they taste right, great. But if I'm going to stand behind this product, I want to know their why, I want to go see it myself. [00:10:10] And I, and that's when I went to Colombia and really embraced that culture and spent a week there and tasting, chocolate and tasting, from the different [00:10:25] regions and stuff



like that. And that's when it kind of dawned on me, how amazing these relationships are, and it just made me commit to what they're doing even more.

SC: And while you were there, [00:10:40] so you got the chance to try all of these different chocolates, from the different regions. Did you also get to interact with any cacao producers while you were at the Luker farm?

TBJ: Yeah. So they have so they, they have their own, [00:10:55] they have, what it is, it's like they have, I cannot remember the name of the class, but basically they have these farmers from all around that come and they do like a teaching session [00:11:10] that's like an educational program, they created where they kind of talk about fermentation and the importance of it, and and you know how to maintain a high [00:11:25] quality of chocolate and why it's important. So they have this class, I think they said every three months that they bring in all these producers from around, all these farmers and they said in this space and we we were blessed enough that [00:11:40] they, one of the classes were going on while we were there, so, I got there and we had a chance to shake hands with a few of the farmers, and then because they deal directly with the farmers and then from the farmers they process. [00:11:55] So we got a really great opportunity to shake some hands and talk to people about, you know, what they are excited about, and why they love working with Luker and things of that nature. And it was a very interesting experience.

SC: [00:12:10] And would you say that, you know, perhaps it's different, depending on which restaurant we are referring to, but in general would you say that the customers that are coming to your restaurants are interested in where [00:12:25] the chocolate is coming from? You know, what country, what company is making it? Or is it really just a decision that you're making because of your beliefs more than just to please what the customer wants?

TBJ: I think [00:12:40] it's a little bit of both. I think that the the initial decision is based on what my beliefs are and as a chef, that's how you create to create from your beliefs and that you would hope that the guests would appreciate and understand [00:12:55] because it's your art and I've been blessed that I've made those decisions and all of my restaurants right now, carry Luker chocolate. I do not use any other brand and [00:13:10] every time they ask me why, let's say the chocolate mousse tastes so good or whatever. I just say, it's a little bit of both. It's a little bit of technique and it's a little bit of the product that we're using and how amazing it is. I have monster [00:13:25] cookies that are it's a 6-ounce chocolate chip cookies that ship nationwide and I use Luker chocolate chips in there and people are going crazy for these cookies and it's the same thing I said, hey it's a little bit [00:13:40] of. Because you can add ingredients, right,



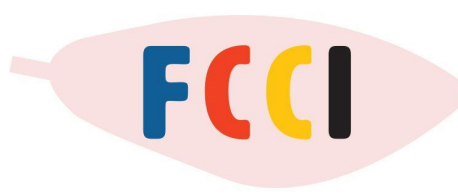
then mix things together and make something taste amazing. It's not just showcasing one item, it's everything. But chocolate chip is such an important part of that cookie that you had to get [00:13:55] a good chocolate for it to taste good and the success of that cookie basically reflects to me the quality of chocolate that's being used in it.

SC: So if we go back a little bit to the story that you were telling [00:14:10] us, when you visited Colombia, you made the decision to go to Luker and really see what was behind the chocolate that they were making, before making the decision to include it in all of your restaurants. I want to hear a little more about [00:14:25] your experience in Colombia, and whether you had the chance to try any traditional foods that were using cacao or chocolate.

TBJ: Yeah. Well, the experience in Colombia was magical. I can't , you know, I'm trying [00:14:40] to jog my memory, to remember everything that happened because so much has happened in that time. But I do remember specifically, like the food and the love and the passion, [00:14:55] and the people are so hospitable and they, it was such a welcoming experience. One of the dishes that kind of stood out for me that I created when I came back, they have the hot chocolate and they put the cheese [00:15:10] in it and then you serve it with like a bread or something and you kind of soak it, and we were doing that, that was a mind-blowing experience, I'd never had cheese and chocolate before, even [00:15:25], so that was really the drinking chocolate was, that was really, very, very, like I came back and created a dessert from that, I did like this chocolate pecan and caramel tart with Deer Creek cheddar foam on it because [00:15:40] I was so, like, fascinated and I kept doing it. I did a chocolate cake and I just grated fresh cheese over it like, things like that. That just kind of like I was like chocolate and cheese, chocolate and cheese as soon as I came back and there was a you know, [00:15:55] there's all these little tarts, there's all the bonbons that we tried at different places, but it was mostly like Colombia is mostly a drinking chocolate place, so there was a lot of drinking chocolate that [00:16:10] was available every morning, we would have it.

SC: So you just mentioned, you know, coming back from Colombia, the inspiration that you got from these traditional foods, do you think that this experience in Colombia seeing Luker[00:16:25] and their mission and how it aligned with yours. Do you think that changed your perception of chocolate and cacao as a pastry chef?

TBJ: Absolutely, a hundred percent, now, you know, I [00:16:40] am asking the questions when I go to restaurants. Where is your chocolate from? You know, now I am, when I taste chocolate, I know fine quality chocolate versus chocolate that's just done really well to mask [00:16:55] the, the quality of the cocoa beans. Now, I am aware of those flavor profiles now and I'm, I have a lot

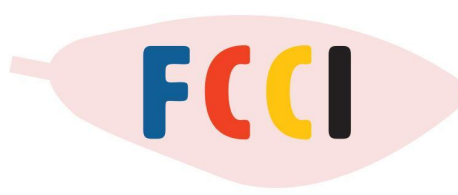


more respect for this product seeing how much hard work goes into [00:17:10] curating those beans and making them perfect, and the length of time that it takes something like five years for a cocoa plant to actually grow and produce like, knowing all of these things and seeing how much by hand [00:17:25] this product is being like you're just, you have so much more respect for it. And it's not just like, let's just waste something, its no, we have to take care of this product because someone [00:17:40] every day, is getting up early in the morning to spend their time working on this farm, so we have to show more respect to our food.

SC: I think this very much aligns with the story that you shared about Colombia [00:17:55] being a drinking chocolate land, right, if you look up Colombian chocolate on Google, what comes up is actually the cup with the hot chocolate and the cheese inside and, you had the opportunity to [00:18:10] be in Colombia for a week, to taste all of these chocolates, to interact with Luker chocolate and you continue to work with it. So, you know, if you were to consider that week that you spent in Colombia, and now the time that you've spent working with Colombian chocolate in all [00:18:25] of your restaurants, to you, what is Colombian chocolate?

TBJ: I think Colombian chocolate, to me, is, very good question by the way. Colombian chocolate, to me, represents [00:18:40] more than just the product. I think it represents hope, I think it represents hard work, I think it represents commitment. And I think it represents [00:18:57] hospitality, right? Because I'm a very emotional person. So, I always look for the emotions in a product and I always look for the why and [00:19:12] my, from my experience with the chocolate company and and, and, and honestly you're, you're playing in that space in which am I? Is it the experience [00:19:27] that Luker provided for me that is making me feel this way? Because the experience was curated for us before we got there. So you, just being honest with yourself. You're like, is this [00:19:42] what I'm feeling or is this the truth of what it is? You know what I mean, if I was out of that bubble and I was just a regular person, would I have the same experience and how would that affect my emotions and decisions? [00:19:58] But I, I didn't get that opportunity. I got the opportunity with the curated experience that was provided already and that's what I see Colombian chocolate is.

SC: It sounds like to me, you [00:20:13] know growing up in Colombia and always Colombians are very proud of the experience they provide for tourists and foreigners when they come to visit, we're very proud of being hospitable and welcoming of [00:20:28] people who are interested in learning about us, in our culture. And when you describe the emotions, and the words that you associate with chocolate, it sounds very much to me like the chocolate is embodying these qualities [00:20:43] that Colombians try to exude when they're welcoming



someone new.

TBJ: Yes.

SC: Something like you're seeing Colombian people in Colombian chocolate. Is the impression that I get.

TBJ: A hundred percent. Anytime I see the chocolate I envision the people, every time I'm using the chocolate, even just us talking and we say Colombian chocolate, it's taking me back to the farm we were on. It's taking me back to those cocoa pods [00:21:13] and the seeds that we were trying. It's taking me back to that experience. So it's not just, I'm not thinking food, I'm not thinking flavor, I'm thinking people.

SC: And while you were in [00:21:28] Colombia for that one week visit, would you care to share anything that you learned while you were on the farm that you did not previously know about chocolate or cacao?

TBJ: Oh, my goodness, man. So so much, [00:21:45] you know, the different beans, right? There's the three types, right? The three types of beans that, that were, that were there, what else. Grafting like how they basically connect two [00:22:00] plants together to create the best product, right? And doing it naturally, the time that chocolate actually takes to grow the, the length of time that it does. The fact that these farmers have to plant [00:22:15] other crops whether it's plantains and, and banana trees and all of these other crops to maintain, while this process while the chocolate is growing. How the, let me see, the fermentation process, how it begins, you know, how it starts in the shed and then it makes its way out to the sunbed and drying, [00:22:46], man. The different regions that have different flavor profiles, so much. There's so many things, and honestly I did not realize how [00:23:01] major Colombia was, like, how much of a major player Colombia was in the fine chocolate production. I didn't realize that.

SC: So [00:23:17] as I am carrying out these interviews with Colombians, mainly, and we start talking about the role of Colombia historically and how when you are learning [00:23:32] from experts about fine chocolate and fine cacao, you know, they always share these maps that highlight different cocoa producing countries and sometimes they have very, very small countries that have almost [00:23:47] a negligible production because they don't produce that much cocoa. But I always wander down to the South America area and look for, for my country and it's very disappointing for me, when, when I generally don't find [00:24:02] it. So for these conversations is trying to find the reason, why, why if we are one of the top 10 cacao producers worldwide, when we are looking at these maps, why are there smaller countries that have a place [00:24:17] in this conversation, that have a place in this map, but we don't. And it seems



like perhaps it's trivial to be so preoccupied about a place on [00:24:32] a map, right? But the thing is, if you don't have a place in the map then you don't have a place in the table and then you're not in anyone's mind.

TBJ: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I, after going to Colombia and experiencing it, honestly, I think [00:24:47] to answer your question, in my opinion, I think it's very political that is the other side of the business that we are not, you know, we're not part of. So I, that's my belief, that there [00:25:02] is a lot more to that, it's not based on quality of product. I think it's based on a lot of other political reasons.

SC: Absolutely. And so you, you've mentioned, [00:25:17] you know, this grocery list almost of things that you were able to learn in Colombia because it was such a new experience to things that you had not seen or learned about even when [00:25:32] you went to culinary school. And what I wonder now is, you you are in a position where you you own and you are the pastry chef of many restaurants in Austin. Is [00:25:47] this knowledge something that you are striving to share with the people who work in your kitchen, you know, is, are your cooks in your kitchen learning about chocolate in a way that you didn't have the opportunity [00:26:02] to learn when you were starting out?

TBJ: Yes, yes, yes. Absolutely. Right now we use chocolate from the Santander region in Colombia, and you know, I [00:26:17] definitely try to share that knowledge as possible. The ideal thing is that it was, you know, that I think it was a little bit more than a week, but it was just this cram session, right, where you're trying to get as much information as possible. [00:26:32] And I, I want to go back without that bright eyed look of how everything is so new and different, and I want to go back and kind of [00:26:47] walk that journey again to, to really soak in. Because I don't think you know, you can't fully grasp, you can grasp and watch as much as you can, and we tried so hard to grasp as much as we can in the time [00:27:02] frame that we had. But I think it's important for me to go back again. So to be able to really plus, we planted some trees. So it's coming up on that time where I need to go back and harvest. But, [00:27:18] you know, that to me, that will clarify a lot more things because I also did have questions when I left, right? Nothing major, but you're still having this feeling of like man, [00:27:33] you know, I wish I had more time, like I wish I was able to really connect to more with this person or that person, but but but I think that, yes, I am teaching as best as can with the knowledge that [00:27:48] I have and my team is very receptive to it, but I would definitely like to straighten that a little more.

SC: Could you share a few of the things that you mentioned you wish you could have learned that you want to go back and definitely something [00:28:03] that you feel like, okay when I go



back this is the first thing on my list, I need to understand this.

TBJ: Yeah. So one, I wish I spent a little bit more time with the [00:28:18] Luker, like the execs, right, to really grasp I'm sure they mentioned like, why they choose the purveyors that they do, right? But I wanted to know how that system actually works and how [00:28:33] it's maintained, and how its ran, because I do believe that there are, because they are some, you know, they have like the rules and regulations as far as you know, no one younger than I believe 15 [00:28:48] can work on the farms and like all of these different things that were in place, but then I was like thinking like well so if a father is, you know, sick or ill and [00:29:03] he has a daughter or son that's 13, 14 and they need to continue to provide for the family and he cannot go out like let's say like covid happened right? And they cannot be able [00:29:18] to go out, that child has to go continue this family legacy but so does that mean, that child cannot work on that? What are those rules and how much do they bend? Because we are talking about people that are necessary [00:29:33] that someone in poverty and so how does that work? And and and also just a lot of more questions on just the product and connecting again. Kind of like a refresher, you know.

SC: [00:29:48] So there are questions about the people behind the cacao and that relationship that Luker maintains with them.

TBJ: Yes. Yes. A hundred percent.

SC: I'm curious. And this is just a quick stepping out of the Colombia questions [00:30:03], just for a second. So you had this experience in 2019 where you learned about Luker and you began this relationship with them and Colombian chocolate. And I'm just curious, since then if you've had [00:30:18] the opportunity to learn about any other companies in any other countries that you were either, piqued your interest because you felt that they might also align with your mission and your beliefs or [00:30:33] just any other companies similar to Luker in the way that you connected with them, that have intrigued you since then.

TBJ: honestly no, no I have not. The [00:30:48] only, I mean, we're so focused on local and our restaurant is built on that culture on local and seasonality. So we don't necessarily go outside of Austin when it comes [00:31:03] to product. It's very, it's rare that we do that. So for me, Luker was or the chocolate was a step outside of our realm [00:31:18] to kind of expand because I said like we do fresh milled grains, (???), we work with about 40 different local farms here in Austin, sustainable fishing that comes from, you know, Austin Texas. [00:31:33] So everything that we do is very community-based, so I have not experienced or try to look outside, when the time comes that I need to, I definitely will but for now we're [00:31:48] growing our brand and



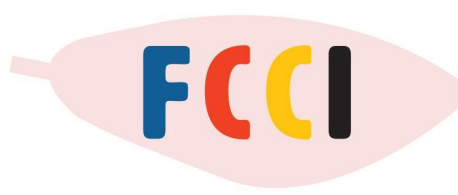
we're now getting into, you know, how like I just I'm going to open up a Caribbean restaurant, so I just came back from Guyana, we did a research trip there. So I'm going to connect with some of [00:32:03] the vendors there to kind of add to what we're doing but not on a large scale as you know, I try to keep it as small as possible but utilizing the product that's provided for us in our community.

SC: I see. Yes another question that I've [00:32:18] been discussing with people in Colombia and this is a question that comes up again and again in conversations about chocolate with people who are part of the industry and I, people are [00:32:33] just always getting asked what their first memory of chocolate was. And I think it's very interesting when you ask someone who's grown up in the US or someone who's grown up in Europe, what their first memory of chocolate is and how that really [00:32:48] contrasts with asking someone who grew up in a cacao producing country, what their first memory is, versus, if I were to ask you, you mentioned, you know, for you chocolate was a thing in your life starting at 18 or 19, right.

TBJ: [00:33:03] Yeah.

SC: When people in the US, are asked, what, their first memory chocolate is, you know, they'll say like a Hershey's kiss. And then if you ask someone in Europe, it'll be like a Cadbury Milk Bar. But in my conversations with Colombians and asking [00:33:18] oh what is your favorite, hat is your first memory of chocolate? Oh I was in my grandparents farm and we were munching on cacao fruit, or my grandmother would use the seeds that I munched on to make that chocolate. And [00:33:33] it's certainly a very different experience when you are in a cacao producing country growing up there, versus if you are in the u.s experiencing the chocolate. And when [00:33:48] I was preparing for this interview, I was trying to find out whether there were cacao trees in Guyana, and if maybe you had some sort of relationship, growing up with cacao trees or chocolate too.

TBJ: Yeah, no, no. I have not, my first [00:34:03] experience with chocolate, honestly, was hot chocolate. And I remember us having, my my aunt, I think she used to get like the drinking [00:34:18] chocolate it used to come in this packet and I remember hearing like oh it's chocolate and then I tr, it was a bitter because I thought it was actually supposed to be a candy bar but the drinking chocolate is so much more bitter. And I remember her putting like a cinnamon [00:34:33] stick in it and boiling it and then they would skim the top off and then he would trade the bottom and that came from Mexico, I believe? Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's what I was thinking. So that was like my first [00:34:48] experience with chocolate. It was having the drinking chocolate, tasting this little, this block of chocolate thinking that it's going to be sweet



and was so surprised that it was bitter and then that being the drinking chocolate that we [00:35:03] would be using. And then as every kid my parents and or family member that would come from America, they would bring Hershey's kisses so that's when I got introduced to [00:35:18] like the sweet side. But then like baking chocolate, which is a whole different thing, that was later on in my career around 18-19 is when I experienced that.

SC: And [00:35:34] stepping back into Colombia and a little bit away from your experience growing up, I was just wondering while you were in Colombia if you had the opportunity to interact with anyone who, whose work you wanted to highlight and [00:35:50] I don't know, maybe while you were there they were able to share what they've been doing in the cacao or in the chocolate industry that you felt maybe was inspiring to you?

TBJ: [00:36:05] Another good question. It was, as I said the experience of very curated so the connections that was made was I was with a few other [00:36:21] actually, I think I was the only chef and it was an instructor, teacher and people that are, what are the, who sells, work for different organization that sells chocolate, [00:36:36] right? And then there was a gentleman that he was interested in like CBD, chocolate things of that nature so, he was kind of exploring and I thought that was really interesting because [00:36:52] that's a whole different market and the fact that he was passionate about understanding the chocolate itself and how it works with this product that he was just blend, that he was trying to [00:37:08] work on, I thought that was very fascinating, I think that was the only person out of the group that I kind of was like, oh tell me more about what you're doing. Because I you know, normally I just don't deal with that [00:37:23] to be able to be in a space and have someone so passionate about it, it just kind of gave me a lot of respect for when those people are making those bars and how much work the people that actually are doing it the right way goes into it, learning the science [00:37:38] behind it. But yeah it was not, there was not too many people that I interacted with, that one was, you know, directly working with what my goals and passion [00:37:53] work.

SC: And is there anyone from maybe the international chocolate or cacao industry who you either look up to or are inspired by?

TBJ: it's [00:38:11], it's interesting. Okay, so it goes back to what I was saying, right? I am emotional, so I don't necessarily look at people's product and admire them in that perspective. [00:38:26] . I'm if, if we've met or, you know, someone that knows me and I'm able to connect with you on a deeper level, I am, now I admire you. I do not necessarily [00:38:41] admire people that are on Instagram and there's no one that I see on Instagram, not like, oh wow, like this people that you're like, oh, that's really cool what you're doing like looks dope, I wonder



what it tastes like, but if I have not tried [00:38:56] it, I don't admire in that way. I admire people whether not necessarily from the work, but like they're their movement like their organizations and what they represent and the businesses that they're starting and things of that [00:39:11] nature as an individual yes, but not necessarily someone that's working with chocolate and think, I try to stay in my lane, and I'm a different person in that way, I try to just stay in my lane and things, that, [00:39:26] that, that connects us is what I'm more interested in interested in than things that separate us.

SC: Right, I appreciate it though. You know, valuing that personal connection rather than just, I guess, [00:39:41] the attention that sometimes gets more recognition.

TBJ: Right? Exactly. Nicely said.

SC: Well actually, this is all I have for today. So, I guess that is a good note [00:39:56] to end in right?

TBJ: Right. Right.

SC: But I did want to ask if there was anything else you want to share or add, and it could be something about your experience with Luker, or your perception about chocolate or cacao today, or even your [00:40:11] perception about Colombia really anything you want to share before I finish the recording. You're welcome to do so.

TBJ: yeah, yeah. Well you know honestly that whole experience that I had visiting in Colombia and visiting the people [00:40:26] and you know seeing the passion, the hope, the drive, the energy there was, was very inspiring for me. Not only in a in a chocolate perspective but as just being a [00:40:41] better person and, and just being more open and honest and pure as you possibly can. And I definitely felt that energy there when I went to Colombia, I [00:40:56] was a blinded Chef, I would say when it comes to chocolate and I was so blinded and I was, and I after being there and being able to get that raw knowledge and being able to see [00:41:11], even like driving up the mountains and seeing people picking the coffee beans by hand. Like, I had so much more respect and compassion for [00:41:26] the, the product. And also, the people, it's a bunch of hard-working people that are very proud, proud of the work that they're doing, and I think that it just needs to be highlighted that's why I kind of like just went a hundred percent [00:41:41] into it. And I didn't even look at other options now. I think that they are some other very amazing, great producers. And, and that does great work. And I'm also very comfortable [00:41:56] and happy with the people that I'm working with because I believe that they're also doing great work and changing the world one day at a time. So I had no need to think of anything else. I was there, I saw it, I touched it, I spoke to the people. [00:42:11] So I'm going to



forever be committed to that because it's that, it means so much to me and I'm dying to go back and kind of redo this whole thing again and and kind of you know, be like "Oh, that's what [00:42:26] that meant", you know, to kind of like just grasp that culture again. So that's what I want to say, Luker has been fantastic, it's a great company, they just came out with oat milk, [00:42:41] milk chocolate. The first dairy free chocolate brand that, that's out in the market right now. So, as far as commercial use, so [00:42:56] I'm super excited to, just started working on some product with that. But they're just constantly, you know, getting better and innovating and I'm very happy and comfortable with where I'm at with my Colombian chocolate.

SC: [00:43:11] Thank you for sharing that. That, that that is really. It makes me very happy and very proud to hear and it's really exciting. You know, to have the opportunity to speak with you about your experience with Colombia and hear that it was so positive [00:43:26] because, what I'm trying to do is highlight and not just highlight, I guess, understand the perception of Colombian chocolate and I am sure, I will get to a point that maybe I'll hear something I don't want to hear.

TBJ: Right, right right.

SC: But so far so good and it makes me so proud that the, the hard work of the people that are behind Colombian chocolate is able to be recognized and

TBJ: Absolutely, absolutely. [00:43:56]

SC: Share your perception as well. And that is just very exciting to me.

TBJ: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I am. I'm a big fan. I think I'm the only person in Austin Texas that's using [00:44:11] Luker chocolate that's using Colombian chocolate. And I also think I'm the only Chef on the level that I'm on, that is using Colombian chocolate, you know? I wish they used me a little bit more. I wish they had reached out to me now, thinking [00:44:26] about it. I wish they'd reach out to me a little bit more and let's do some more work together but, but not.