

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2026

WEDNESDAY 18TH - FRIDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2026

BEURS VAN BERLAGE, AMSTERDAM



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

INTRODUCTION

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2026

Chocoa 2026: Chocolate Makers Forum

Dates: February 18-20, 2026

The Chocolate Makers Forum 2026 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, chocolate makers meet here annually to connect with fellow makers, to discover new techniques to elevate their chocolate craft and to discuss challenges and the latest topics to develop their market and business and sharing learnings amongst peers.

Day 1: Wednesday 18th February 2026

Time	Session	Title
15:30 – 17:00	Opening	Welcome & Opening Session

Day 2: Thursday 19th February 2026

Time	Session	Title
13:00 – 14:15	1 - Panel	Beyond Direct Trade: Ways to Access Fine Flavour Cacao
14:30 – 15:45	2 - Panel	Voices Behind the World's Best Cacao
15:45 – 16:15	Cocoa and Coffee Break	
16:15 – 17:30	3 - Interactive	United We Craft: Why and How to Create a National Bean To Bar Association

Day 3: Friday 20th February 2026

Time	Session	Title
13:00 – 14:15	4 - Panel	Adapting Smartly: Turning Consumer Trends into Profit in Craft Chocolate
14:30 – 15:45	5 - Interactive	Chocolate Failures & F*ck Ups: Turning Setbacks into Success Stories
15:45 – 16:15	Cocoa and Coffee Break	
16:15 – 17:30	6 - Panel	Technology and Innovation in Chocolate: Redefining the Future of Flavour



GET YOUR TICKETS

Chocolate Makers Forum 2026 – Page 1

DAY 1: Wednesday 18th February

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2026

15:30 Welcome & Opening Session

Welcome to the Chocolate Makers Forum by the team of The Company Behind Chocoo (TCBC).

Join us afterwards for the an engaging and inspiring opening session with Ricardo Trillos, co-founder of Cao Chocolates and business consultant at The Choconnector. With over 15 years of experience in bean to bar chocolate making and consulting, he brings a wealth of knowledge and passion for craft chocolate. This session will set the tone perfectly for an inspiring event with new connections and possibilities to share insights.

More details will be announced soon.

Moderators: Caroline Lubbers, The Company Behind Chocoo

Speakers: Ricardo Trillos, The Choconnector



GET YOUR TICKETS

Chocolate Makers Forum 2026 – Page 2

DAY 2: Thursday 19th February

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2026

13:00 Session 1: Panel – Beyond Direct Trade: Ways to Access Fine Flavour Cacao

The landscape of cacao sourcing keeps evolving fast, and we will map out different models for how cacao moves from farm to maker today. We will explore what “direct trade” really means in 2025: farmers shaping post-harvest for flavour, makers building long-term and accountable relationships at origin, and traders who are no longer just middlemen but partners in logistics, quality and access. Is “direct trade” still the goal, or just the story we tell? With field expertise and real cases, we will look at where fine cacao sourcing is going next.

Moderators: TBC

Speakers: Mariana de la Rosa, Gaia Cacao
Martin Christy, IICCT

14:30 Session 2: Panel – Voices Behind the World’s Best Cacao

Discover how the Cacao of Excellence Awards are driving change across the cacao value chain. Producers from previous Cacao of Excellence Awards’ Best 50 share how international recognition has opened new opportunities at origin. The session also introduces practical sensory tools and training to help chocolate makers recognise cacao flavour diversity, followed by a Cacao Diversity Tasting of standard-recipe chocolates made from the Best 50 award-winning cacao origins.

Moderators: Cacao of Excellence

Speakers: TBC

15:45 Cocoa and Coffee Break

16:15 Session 3: Interactive – United We Craft: Why and How to Create a National Bean To Bar Association

This session will provide practical guidance to create and develop a national Bean To Bar association. We will also share key insights to make the process easier, helping avoid the common pitfalls faced by pioneering initiatives. In addition, several national associations will present both the successes and the challenges they’ve had to overcome and what they’re looking to achieve.

Uniting is the only way to preserve and grow the Bean To Bar movement, educate consumers effectively, ensure the sustainability of craft makers, and keep quality, fairness, and craftsmanship at the heart of chocolate’s future.

Moderators: Rosário Cunha Brandão, Bean to Bar Portugal

Speakers: Vincent Ferreira, Bean to Bar Europe
Raquel González Setién, Bean to Bar Spain



GET YOUR TICKETS

Chocolate Makers Forum 2026 – Page 3

DAY 3: Friday 20th February

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2026

13:00 Session 4: Panel – Adapting Smartly: Turning Consumer Trends into Profit in Craft Chocolate

Love it or hate it, the viral sensations like *Dubai Chocolate* and *Angel Hair Chocolate* are changing how people discover and buy chocolate worldwide. This panel explores how craft chocolate makers can stay relevant — and profitable — by responding strategically to these trends.

Experts from across the chocolate and consumer industries will identify emerging markets, share examples of diversifying beyond the bar, and creating new formats, flavours, and experiences that meet modern demand.

With insights from successful examples the discussion will highlight how innovation, smart product development, and creative business models can drive sustainable profitability.

The key question: *Do you sell what you make — or make what sells?*

Moderators: TBC

Speakers: Erik Sauër, El Sauco

14:30 Session 5: Interactive - Chocolate Failures & F*ck Ups: Turning Setbacks into Success Stories

Failure is often an unspoken ingredient. In this session inspired by the global “F*ck Up Nights” movement, craft chocolate professionals pull back the curtain on their biggest missteps — from disastrous machinery breakdowns and costly infrastructure errors to recipe experiments gone wrong and marketing campaigns that missed the mark.

Through honest storytelling panelists will explore the powerful connection between failure and growth, revealing how setbacks can shape stronger teams, smarter systems, and more resilient businesses. Participants will gain insight into how to reframe mistakes as opportunities for learning, creativity, and growth.

To celebrate the spirit of transparency and courage, we’ll also present the “Biggest F*ck Up Award”, inviting audience members to share their stories and awarding one brave audience member will be recognized for sharing their own story of failure — and rewarded with a Cacao of Excellence Treasure Box.

Moderators: TBC

Speakers: Dylan Butterbaugh, Manoa Chocolate



GET YOUR TICKETS

Chocolate Makers Forum 2026 – Page 4

DAY 3: Friday 20th February

CHOCOLATE MAKERS FORUM 2026

15:45 Cocoa and Coffee Break

16:15 Session 6: Panel - Technology and Innovation in Chocolate: Redefining the Future of Flavour

This panel is driven by technological breakthroughs, bold experimentation, and a reimagining of what “chocolate” can be. This panel explores how innovation is reshaping the chocolate scene — from cacao genetics and fermentation techniques to product formulation and ethical sourcing models.

We'll dive into groundbreaking developments such as heat-resistant chocolate innovations, examine how data-driven tools and AI are influencing flavour profiling. The discussion will also address one of today's most provocative topics — cocoa-free chocolate alternatives — featuring perspectives on the technological and ethical implications of these emerging products.

Moderators: TBC

Speakers: José López Ganem, ICCR
Win-Win: Cocoa Free Alternatives
Marika van Santvoort, Pacha de Cacao



GET YOUR TICKETS

Chocolate Makers Forum 2026 – Page 5