



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below, for your convenience, is a list of info based on questions that we tend to receive on a regular basis from people who contact us about our Sacred Plant Ceremonies.

Q. IS THIS AYAHUASCA?

A. The term “ayahuasca” is the hispanicized spelling of a Quechua word used to describe a home-brewed tea made with 2 or more psychotropic plants that grow in the Amazonian rainforest of Central and South America. The brew we serve is comparable to ayahuasca although it is made -- not from South American plants -- but from indigenous Hawaiian and Pacific island entheogens (psychotropic plants that induce a spiritual experience aimed at, literally, "becoming one with God"). The effect of this unique blend resembles that of “Cielo Yellow” ayahuasca, which is known to be milder and to cause less physical discomfort than most. These plants have been celebrated for their healing and visionary effects in rituals and ceremonies for over a thousand years in Hawaii and throughout the Pacific..

Q. IT'S LEGAL TO DRINK AYAHUASCA IN CEREMONY IF YOU ARE A CHURCH AND YOU USE IT FOR RELIGIOUS PURPOSES, RIGHT?

A. In spite of the fact that religious use of entheogens (plant teachers) is protected by the First Amendment of the US Constitution and by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA), the Federal regulations that codify these documents make it legal “if and only if it is legal in the jurisdiction.” This puts the burden of legality onto the States, which must then have language in their State Constitutions to co-parallel that of the US Constitution. Most states (Hawaii among them) do not have such language. This makes the legal use of scheduled entheogens for spiritual purposes -- and their unauthorized importation and/or distribution -- arguable, at best, in court in most states.

Q. ARE THE PLANTS YOU OFFER LEGAL?

A. Yes, that is the beauty of what we offer. The Earth is a treasure trove of psychoactive activity. Where South American ayahuasca is a controlled, Schedule 1 substance in the USA, and where possession of an ayahuasca brew is a felony punishable by imprisonment in Hawaii, in most countries, and in the majority of the USA, the plants we use are not yet regulated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) nor are they suppressed by law enforcement. They are 100% legal to possess, consume and distribute -- at least for the time being.

Q. WHAT ARE THE NAMES OF THE PLANTS YOU USE?

A. Depending on the season and availability, we work with a combination of more than 10 different strains of a half dozen or so Hawaiian and Pacific island plants that grow wild in nature. The active ingredients in the plants are called "alkaloids." These act on various brain receptors and synthesize with one another to potentiate their various psychoactive, psychotropic, entheogenic features.

Because much of what has led to the criminalization of ayahuasca is related to its fast-growing, worldwide popularity, we prefer to keep the actual names of the plants and their alkaloids close to the vest. We are not in this to get famous or to have hoards of people flock to our ceremonies -- especially at the risk of publicizing the plants and opening the opportunity for them to be deemed illegal too. We honor that we have discovered something unique, powerful, and unusual here, and we choose to keep it that way by downplaying our recipe and maintaining the names of the plants as a "proprietary blend."

Q. HOW MUCH RESEARCH HAS BEEN DONE ON THESE PLANTS?

A. Since none of the plants are controlled substances in the US, scientific information about their effects is limited. Our shamans, however, have been researching entheogens and the 150 uses of each of Hawaii's 150 trees and plants for over twenty years. Most of our knowledge regarding the plants we use comes from anecdotal reports from our own and others' participation. We know of no controlled clinical trials conducted to determine how beneficial or harmful these plants are for human consumption.

Q. WHAT ARE THE PHARMACOLOGICAL PROPERTIES OF THE PLANTS?

A. The challenge of explaining the plants' pharmacological properties without a wealth of scientific study is complex with a multitude of aspects, to which there are no quick and easy answers. Like ayahuasca, the plants we use are related to the coffee tree although their alkaloids are more closely related to ergot (fungi) alkaloids. The true psychoactive properties are yet to be fully understood. A reasonable theory is that both ayahuasca and the trees we use work on the same 5-HT_{2A} receptor, a subtype of the 5-HT receptor, which belongs to the serotonin receptor family and is predominantly expressed in the brain.

Q. WHAT DOES THE BREW TASTE LIKE?

A. The brew doesn't taste bad though it is somewhat bitter; so we serve apple juice alongside the tea for people to cut the taste and/or create their own alchemical blend. Most guests remark that the brew itself is pleasant tasting or, at worst, palatable.

Q. DOES YOUR BREW CONTAIN KAVA, CACAO, CANNABIS OR PSILOCYBIN MUSHROOMS?

A. In a word, no. The psychoactive properties of our brew are attributed to a mix of lesser explored plants, none of which are kava, cacao, cannabis or mushrooms. Our tea contains a combination of lesser known alkaloids, which combine to create a psychoactive, psychotropic, entheogenic effect.

Q. ARE THE PLANTS SAFE?

A. We have no reason to believe that the plants we use in the amounts we serve them are unsafe for people of good health. Some of the chemicals found in the plants, however, are known to interfere with drug-metabolizing enzymes in the liver and, when taken together with certain drugs or medications can cause stressful or toxic interactions. In an attempt to disclose all questionable drug- and medication-interactions on our application form, we advise everyone to (1) avoid consuming tobacco, alcohol and recreational drugs -- including marijuana -- for 1-2 weeks before ceremony, (2) absolutely avoid all alcohol and Tylenol® for at least 24 hours before and after ceremony, and (3) consume no other entheogens, particularly ayahuasca, for at least 2 weeks before and afterwards. Much of this is to also encourage a deeper experience of the plants without setting oneself up for an otherwise inevitable purge or lack of effect. To date, no one has ever reported any damaging effects from the plants we serve in the amounts we offer them.

Q. IS THE EFFECT OF THESE PLANTS THE SAME AS THAT OF AYAHUASCA?

A. This is a tricky question to answer as some people say yes, and some say no. Moreover, ayahuasca plants and recipes vary in potency and effect not only from location to location, but also between people and from one ceremony to the next. At one end of the spectrum lies one of the world's most powerful hallucinogens; at the other end are folks who claim to get little or no effect.

Those who “surrender” to the experience without efforting to control it tend to have the most meaningful, immediate response. Internal chatter can block the effect, and meditation can enhance it. Health, genetics, and mental state can also play a role in the intensity of the effect, and using certain psychiatric medications or recreational drugs (e.g., alcohol, nicotine, caffeine and marijuana) in the days preceding a ceremony can dull the experience -- and, in some cases, be harmful. Certain foods (ex., salt and fatty foods) can also have a disruptive impact, and genetic differences may even contribute to differing intensities by playing a role in how the body breaks down and assimilates the plant alkaloids.

In relation to ayahuasca's entheogenic aim (i.e., becoming one with the Inner Divine) our plants and ayahuasca are no different. Whatever your expectation, you will get from the ceremony what you need. Where ayahuasca is, however, known to be a “sledgehammer” or “cement maker” experience, our plants are gentler and are grounded in Unconditional Love (432 Hz) with less of a physical load.

Below is an email excerpt from a first-time participant who had this to say about his experience:

“I just wanted to thank you for inviting me into your home and sharing the plant medicine with me. It was a truly changing experience, and I have carried it with me back home, back to my ‘regular’ life and career. These things don’t feel so regular anymore, though. I am excited about my life and the world in a way I haven’t been since I set out for college almost 20 years ago. Truly, thank you for your guidance and for being so warm and welcoming. If I’m ever back on the island, I’ll be sure to say hello!”

Q. DO PEOPLE PURGE ON THESE PLANTS LIKE THEY DO ON AYAHUASCA?

A: One of the most publicized effects of plant medicines is the purgative effect that has to do with the bucket beside each guest’s space. In cultures whose rituals include plant medicines, physical and mental purging are considered to be a form of physical and spiritual cleansing and are regarded as desirable. According to those traditions, purging can occur through a number of means, including crying, shaking, sweating, vomiting and/or diarrhea. Because our plants are gentler and less physical than most forms of ayahuasca, only about 20-30% of our guests end up using their buckets.

Q. HOW DANGEROUS IS IT TO MIX CBD AND/OR Rx MEDICATIONS WITH THESE PLANTS?

A. It all has to do with how the body metabolizes medications. When you swallow a dose of a CBD or a pharmaceutical drug, for example, the substance passes through the digestive tract and liver, where enzymes break it down. The most significant of these enzymes for drug metabolism is the cytochrome P450 (CYP450) family of enzymes, which actually destroys most of the medication, allowing only a small fraction, approximately 10 percent, of the active ingredient(s) to pass into the bloodstream.

The plants we work with inhibit the actions of CYP450 enzymes and, although the exact mechanism of this is not yet fully understood, they bind to the active sites of the enzymes, making them less available -- or possibly not available -- to bind to medications or to break them down. This could be potentially dangerous as a much larger dose (possibly an overdose?) of a medication could make it past the liver and into the bloodstream. Moreover, these effects do not simply go away within a few hours. Once the plants bind to the enzymes, they stay bound up for several days, creating a waiting period before the body creates a new batch of CYP450 enzymes.

Studies have not yet been conducted to show how long the plants we use inhibit CYP450 enzymes. They have, however, been conducted on the effects of grapefruit and grapefruit juice on CBD and drug metabolism. Grapefruit binds up CYP450 enzymes in a similar way to our plants, taking about 24 hours after ingesting grapefruit for the body to regain approximately 50% of the enzymes that had been available before ingestion. At 48 to 72 hours, the body will have formed all new enzymes, and CBD or drug metabolism returns to normal. Therefore, it's not a simple matter of timing doses by a few hours to avoid these effects. It may take as much as 3 days before enzyme levels return to normal.

Moreover, the plants we use are known to be more potent at binding CYP450 enzymes than grapefruit. Therefore, it could be extremely unsafe, even potentially fatal, to combine our sacred plants with CBD and/or with medications that carry the warning, ***“Avoid eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice while taking this medication.”*** To err on the side of caution, we advise 100% against such a combination without the consent and strict supervision of your healthcare team.

Q. DOES TAKING ANTIDEPRESSANTS PRECLUDE ME FROM PARTICIPATING?

A. The two most popular forms of pharmaceutical antidepressants on the market today are Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI's) and Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOI's.) We used to discourage folks who were taking any kind of medications from attending our ceremonies, but people pleaded and begged to such a degree that we designed a separate waiver for folks on medications, reminding them that they are 100% responsible for their own well being, and advising them to consult with their own healthcare team before making the decision to attend.

Since making this change in approach, we have had people on all kinds of medications join us -- antidepressants, anti-anxiety medicines, statins, blood pressure meds, cancer drugs, and even HIV medications. Without exception, we have never seen any of them have anything but a positive experience. The community hospital is only 2 miles away from us, and we have never had to take anyone there during or after ceremony. No one has ever voiced even a modicum of concern.

For this reason, on our application form, we ask for an honest and thorough list of any recreational and/or pharmaceutical medications you may be taking. Chances are, you will be allowed to join us regardless. At worst, you will be asked to sign a medication-specific waiver in advance of ceremony.

Q. IF I GET FEARFUL OR ANXIOUS DURING THE CEREMONY, WILL THERE BE SOMEONE THERE TO HELP ME?

A. The plants we use are based in Unconditional Love (432 Hz), not in fear or anxiety. No one on our watch has ever complained of or reported a fearful experience. To the contrary, people generally find the plants to be peaceful, healing and deeply soothing. Shaman sits in the circle throughout the entire evening; so if you find yourself to be an exception to the above for some reason, you are welcome to approach him at any time to ask for advice, guidance, assistance and/or reassurance.

Q. HOW MANY PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN A CEREMONY AT ANY GIVEN TIME?

A. Our minimum circle size is two (2) plus Shaman; our maximum is eight (8). We average 2 - 3 at slower times of the year and 4 - 5 during the busier months.

Q. MAY A NON-PARTICIPATING FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER COME WITH ME TO EITHER WITNESS THE CEREMONY OR REMAIN ON PREMISES THROUGHOUT?

A. No. For the sake of the integrity of the energy and the ceremony itself, that is not allowed. If your friend or family member would like to join you in a shamanic activity that does not involve Sacred Plants, they may enjoy one of our private Shamaic Sessions and/or an Eco-adventure/Mystic tour instead.

Q. IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A PRIVATE CEREMONY, AND IF SO, WHAT DOES THAT ENTAIL?

A. Even though our minimum circle size is two (2), solo individuals who apply for ceremony on a Sunday evening when no one else has applied will be given the opportunity to have a private Sunday evening ceremony by booking an accompanying 2-hour private weekday session or an Eco-adventure with Shaman. Should one or two people want to secure a particular Sunday evening for a private ceremony for which we turn other people away, we ask a standard accompanying donation of \$1,000.

Q. HOW MANY CEREMONIES SHOULD I ATTEND? IS IT BETTER TO DO MORE THAN ONE?

A. You may attend as many ceremonies as you wish, and yes, the deepest involvement comes from building upon multiple experiences as you integrate the work and come to understand the plants. You may also participate in ceremonies in conjunction with our various other shamanic offerings.

The greatest opportunity for personal and spiritual growth comes from combining Sacred Plant Ceremonies with our 10-day to 2-week Shamanic 'Life Purpose' Rebirth. After this particular program, you are offered an opportunity to become certified as a Healer / Medicine Woman / Medicine Man in affiliation with our parent church, the New Haven Native American Church (NHNAC).

Q. I' WANT TO DO 3 CEREMONIES IN THE COURSE OF 3 DAYS. IS THAT POSSIBLE?

A. You are more than welcome to participate in as many of our ceremonies and/or shamanic offerings as you wish, though ceremonies take place on Sunday only, and there is no benefit in ingesting our brew in daily succession. Because it takes several days for the body, mind and spirit to assimilate the effects of the particular plant combinations we work with, the once-a-week ceremonial rhythm is most advantageous.

Q. WILL I BE ABLE TO DRIVE AFTERWARDS?

A. Indeed! The effects of the ceremony last for only 3 - 4 hours; then we have soup and group sharing for another hour or so; most people feel quite confident to drive at that point. No one, however, is allowed to get behind the wheel of a motor vehicle without Shaman's also feeling confident that that is a wise choice. Likewise, no one is allowed to drive further than 20 miles (30 minutes) afterwards. We have never had anyone stay with us much beyond midnight before driving away in the end.

Q. IS IT IMPORTANT TO SPEND THE DAY AFTER THE CEREMONY RESTING?

A. You will be able to spend the day after the ceremony however you wish. Many people enjoy allotting time for integration and journaling or contemplation; some have even scheduled an eco-adventure with us for the next day. The general consensus is that you will wake up feeling relaxed and mellow.

Q. HOW DO I SUBMIT MY DONATION?

A. The easiest way, after you email us your completed application form, waiver, scan of your photo ID, and a real-time selfie (head and shoulders shot with eyes unencumbered, looking directly into the camera) is to submit your donation via one of the 2 links below.

https://www.paypal.com/donate?hosted_button_id=ZTRW4QFJLVARG

https://www.paypal.com/donate?hosted_button_id=BB7QS5ESBFMBL



Otherwise, you may telephone us at the phone number at the bottom, and we will gladly assist you in processing your donation submission. If you prefer to wire funds, please phone or email us at the info below to obtain bank wiring instructions.

We trust that the information in this document and in our Ceremony Guidelines pdf, which is downloadable on our website and available as a pdf form by email, will answer most of your questions and concerns. If there is anything we have overlooked, or if you care to book our 10-day Shamanic 'Life Purpose' Rebirth, please refer back to the website, or else contact us via the phone number or email address below.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Jack 'Golden Feather' and ZZ

<http://www.muaisa.org>

email: muaisa@yahoo.com / tel. +1 808 323 3238