



*Fine Chocolate  
Industry Association*

## **Fine Chocolate Industry Association (FCIA) Consumer Survey**

### **Executive Summary**

The Fine Chocolate Industry Association (FCIA) is elevating the art and business of fine flavored cacao and chocolate. A national consumer survey, commissioned by the FCIA in August of 2021, shared data on consumer insights and trends.

#### **Who is the Fine Chocolate Consumer?**

Demographically, the core fine chocolate consumer is younger and more affluent, but more than anything, they are environmentally and socially conscious.

#### **Core fine chocolate consumers are more common among:**

- Asian Americans (26%)
- Urbanites (25%)
- Millennials (23%)
- Above-average income earners (23%) or affluent households (27%)

#### **Behaviorally, more likely to:**

- See fine chocolate as worth the splurge vs expensive
- Be environmentally and socially engaged consumers
- Like variety, exploration and information/transparency
- Have specific cacao-sourcing preferences, both regions and countries
- Shop around to find what they are looking for, including online, farmers' markets and chocolate festivals

#### **Traceability, transparency and sustainability practices have increased importance for fine chocolate consumers:**

- 72% value initiatives to reduce product/package waste
- 71% value traceability of ingredients and have cacao sourcing preferences
- 70% look for transparency in the production process and
- 68% value sustainable sourcing avoiding deforestation
- 62% seek brands engaging in responsible labor practices

#### **Origin Preferences:**

- Central America 16%
- Caribbean 15%
- South America 11%
- Africa 11%
- Asia 6%

Find out more about the FCIA at [finechocolateindustry.org](https://finechocolateindustry.org).

Be sure to visit our consumer website at [makeminefine.com](https://makeminefine.com).



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### Key Trends

- **Education can drive experimentation.** Consumer education about the product and process can result in greater appreciation of chocolate’s many textures and flavors. This may move consumers past the price point hurdle. Examples of how to educate consumers include:
  - Tasting classes/kits
  - Cross-merchandising opportunities and pairings, such as coffee, tea, spirits, beer and cheese
- **Social and environmental stewardship matters.** Using Gen Z and Millennial response barometer for future interest, the importance of social and environmental stewardship in chocolate production will increase further.

Important (4+5 on the 5-point scale)	Mostly fine chocolate
Traceability of ingredients	71%
Transparency of production process	70%
Sustainable sourcing that avoids deforestation	68%
Engagement in responsible labor practices	62%
Initiatives to reduce water and energy usage	62%
Initiatives to reduce product/package waste	72%
Organic farming practices (cacao, cane sugar, etc.)	59%

[TSIRO Alliance](#) is a great example of an initiative that would appeal to these consumers. It’s a partnership with USAID, Catholic Relief Services and international chocolate companies focused on conserving biodiversity, improving the livelihoods of smallholder cacao farmers. Participating companies include: [Beyond Good](#) and [Akesson’s Organic](#).

- **Award credentials are meaningful among fine chocolate consumers.** 66% of fine chocolate consumers say chocolate festival award winner credentials influence their purchase decision
- **E-commerce is now a must.** Chocolate e-commerce is a big area of growth: 77% of fine chocolate buyers have purchased chocolate online for gifting.
- **Innovation drives engagement.** It is the range of items and continued innovation in flavor, texture, ingredients, packaging and branding, reflecting a change in consumer preferences. Demand for [vegan](#) plant based milk options such as [oat](#) or [coconut milk](#), or [sugar alternatives](#).

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- **Certifications matter.** 76% of fine chocolate consumers are willing to pay more for chocolate featuring one or more certification but want to know exactly what the benefits and process involves. Heirloom Cacao Preservation (HCP) is a designation important to fine chocolate consumers. Specialty Food Show presenter and member, Matt Caputo, is on the board of the HCP.

- Heirloom cacao beans used in making these bars are endowed with a combination of historic, cultural, botanical, geographical and flavor value that is the foundation of the best tasting chocolate. [Why is heirloom cacao important?](#)
- [Chocolate makers using heirloom cacao](#) and [Adopt a tree program](#) (hpcacao.org)

Certification/labels influence purchase decision (4+5)	Mostly fine chocolate
Fair trade/Fair trade certified	62%
Certified organic/USDA organic	65%
Non-GMO Project Verified	66%
Rainforest Alliance	54%
Direct trade	67%
Award winner of a chocolate show	66%
Certified B corporation	60%

- **Variety is the spice of life.** Experimentation is important in fine chocolate. Offer other options to single origin bars that are not as prevalent in the marketplace.
  - Mood is the biggest purchase-driver, putting variety in the driver's seat.
  - 55% of fine chocolate consumers try items from different fine chocolate makers/chocolatiers. For consumers who are already familiar with single origin dark bars and are ready to explore alternatives, bars with a sense of place offer an opportunity to try something different.
    - Use of ingredients add to flavors that give chocolate a sense of place.
    - Chocolate is a passport to experience the local cuisine and culture.
    - Storytelling: Consumers are interested in the sources and stories of the foods they eat.