

# A CHOCOLATE BAR TO SAVE THE RED SISKIN



In SOCIAL RESPONSABILITY, FEATURED, NEWS, SOCIAL RESPONSABILITY by josemiguel / Wednesday December 21st, 2016

By: Carmen Isabel Maracara

Photos: Courtesy of Mantuano

*"We want to help save the Red Siskin from its extinction.* Thus, we decided to collaborate in the project called *Iniciativa Cardenalito*, with **PROVITA** organization, which in alliance with the **Smithsonian Institution**, is going to sale this **chocolate bar** at its headquarters as well as at other allied museums in the United States. These funds will be totally allocated for this purpose".

This was expressed by Giovanni Conversi, from **Chocolates Mantuano**, who is responsible for the idea of one 100 grams chocolate bar 75 % "Cazaña" filled with little pieces of Venezuelan organic coffee, certified Bird friendly Arabic Coffee.

Such a particular mixture of aromas and textures is not just a coincidence, but it responds to the characteristics and the habitat of this beautiful red-black plumage bird. *"In many coffee plantations, there is also cocoa because the needed climate and soil are very similar.* The Red Siskin also lives in these plantations because it feeds on coffee, when the grain is unripe. Hence, it was perfect to make a chocolate bar where both ingredients were matched in its honour", Conversi says.

**The master chocolate maker adds that Cazaña is the area where this chocolate comes from, located in Miranda state**, where the Red Siskin also populates (although it is generally thought that its habitat is only in Lara state). "It inhabits in that type of plantations, in tall trees like the *bucare* and the *mijao*. Its extinction is associated with its hunting to export its feathers. It is also believed that it is due to an indiscriminate tree felling as well as the invasion of its space by man", he adds.



## A VERSION FOR SYBARITES

**-Are there other experiences that inspired you in this cocoa and coffee concoction?**

-In Mantuano we already had a chocolate bar with coffee. By coincidence, when we have talked about the Red Siskin, we were asked if we had a bar with coffee and the type it was. I told them we did have one, but with coffee beans. They told me that was the way they wanted it, not a deluge, not powder or instant coffee. But, we did not have one that was friendly with birds as the one we added now.

**-But, is this a limited edition?**

-Yes and only for exportation. We have made 200 squares of 100 grams, and now for December we will send 400 more squares. This is a continuous project, when the supply is about to running out, they ask for new provisions. We will possibly launch this product here in Caracas in February 2017.

**- And who designed the packaging?**

-It was Titina Penzini, because she's also a plastic artist and a watercolourist. She has been conducting a very strong campaign against industrialization, to support entrepreneurs. Although she is more known for her work in the fashion world, she is also an artist, and she has joined the project. She is very fond of the work I have been doing for Mantuano. One day we talked about painting and her passion for it. When I met with the people from PROVITA, I told them that the packaging should be artistically intervened, rather than just decorating it with a painted Red Siskin. PROVITA also knows Titina's work, thus this alliance was formed.



## EVERYONE WITH THE RED SISKIN

According to PROVITA, the Red Siskin (*Sporagra cucullata*) "once populated Venezuelan sky. Today, this small bird is probably the most threatened in the country. About 60 years ago, there were millions of Red Siskin, now there are only, with luck, about three thousand. In fact, we can now find more Red Siskin drawn on our 100 bolivars instead of flying free in our forests".

The Venezuelan Fauna Protection Association claims that the species has been on risk for obtaining its feathers as well as for the destruction of its habitat, but it has been affected even more by its illegal capture to interbreed it with the yellow canary in order to produce a red canary, highly appreciated in aviculture worldwide. Hence, this emblematic bird has been classified under "*Critically Endangered*" on the Red List of Venezuelan Fauna.

Therefore, **it is necessary to support this and any other alliance to protect its beauty for the next generations.**

