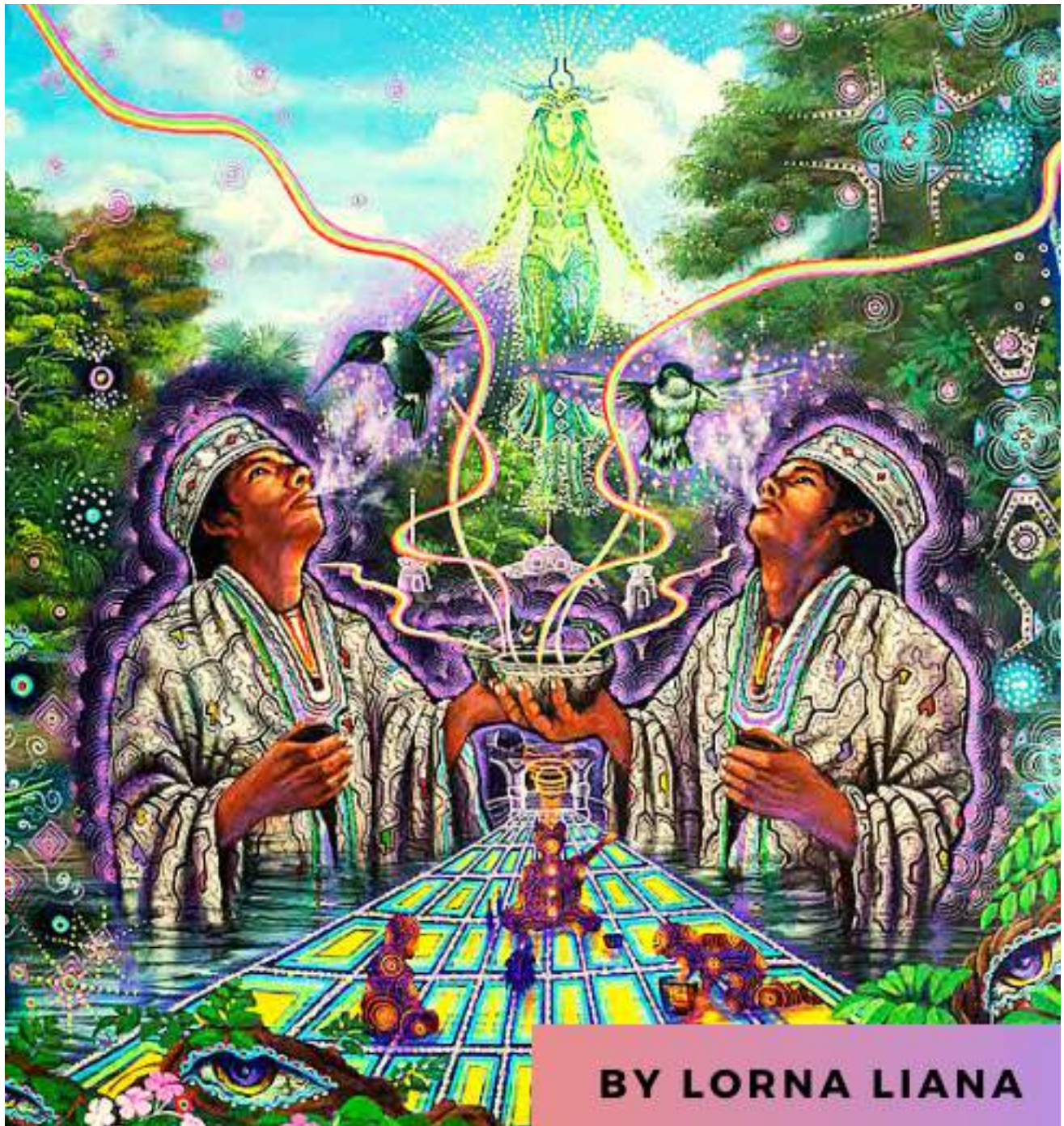


THE UNCENSORED GUIDE TO AYAHUASCA PREPARATION



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About Lorna Liana



Lorna Liana is a new media strategist and online business coach to visionary entrepreneurs. With over 25+ years of psychedelic experience, Lorna tracks the developments in the Psychedelic Renaissance and global expansion of ayahuasca with great interest and engaging conversations with thought leaders in the field.

Since 2003, she's attended ayahuasca ceremonies with 30+ different shamans and facilitators, 7 indigenous tribes, several Brazilian churches, and a host of neo-shamanic circles, in Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Europe, the US, and Asia.

About Juan Carlos Taminchi



Born July 7th 1985, Juan Carlos Taminchi is a young Peruvian artist. At eight years old, the surrounding nature drew his attention and stimulated his drawing abilities, and thus opened the possibilities to artistic dreaming. In college, he attended a drawing class that inspired him to study art at the Pucallpa School of Arts, where he then became an Art Professor.

Since 2012, he has dedicated his life to serving and sharing the sacred medicine of Amazon, and also leading shamanic art therapy workshops in various spiritual events. He is often invited to do live painting in events and concerts all around the globe.

You can find his work at taminchivisions.com

Introduction

Ayahuasca is a powerful plant medicine long considered sacred by the indigenous peoples of the Amazon. It is a hallucinogenic tea that is made typically from the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine (commonly called ayahuasca) and the leaves of the *Psychotria viridis* shrub (commonly known as chacruna), although it might also be made with the leaves of the *Diplopterys cabrerana* shrub (known as chaliponga or chagroponga).

The indigenous people of the Amazon traditionally follow certain dietary guidelines when working with this plant medicine, avoiding specific foods and behaviors in order to have a deeper physical and psychospiritual healing experience with the plant teacher. Following a traditional dieta in the Amazon was straightforward in the old days, since the variety of food available was also limited.

As modern civilization has evolved to expand the range of foods, drugs and other substances we can put into our bodies, the list of things to avoid when preparing for an ayahuasca ceremony has grown longer. In particular, a long and growing list of synthetic drugs are found to be extremely dangerous to use – even fatal – in conjunction with ayahuasca.

Unfortunately, because many of these synthetic drugs are inventions of the Western world, many indigenous shamans and curanderos will have little understanding of what they are, how to ask if a Western visitor is taking them, nor what to do if there is a fatal reaction.

For this reason, it's more important than ever that you, the ayahuasca seeker, do your own due diligence and take responsibility for your own safety. There are three main areas of concern that you need to be aware of in order to have a safe and profoundly healing ayahuasca ceremony. These are:

1. Dietary guidelines and food restrictions
2. Spiritual preparation
3. Medical contraindications and dangerous drug combinations

In this guide, I'll discuss these three categories, including some frequently asked questions that come up, and then present you with a long and short list of dietary restrictions to follow. First though, here are the basics about traditional preparations for ayahuasca:

What Is an Ayahuasca Dieta?

Within the Amazonian plant medicine tradition (which has its own deep-rooted philosophies and practices, much like Traditional Chinese Medicine) it's considered beneficial to prepare oneself physically, emotionally, and spiritually in order to receive the most benefit from working with sacred plant medicines – who are considered to be master teachers older and wiser than humanity. This method of preparation is known as a dieta. Doing a dieta is like going on a spiritual retreat, where you will be receiving sacred teachings and blessings from a spiritual master, in this case, the master plant teacher.

It not only involves avoiding certain foods, it's a process of cleansing your body and mind that involves commitment and sacrifice. It's believed that by eliminating stimulating food containing salt, sugar, spices, and caffeine, avoiding media and sexual activity, the energy of the plant can work more effectively. It's also believed that when working with a sacred plant medicine, it's best to not take any other substances or medicines. Vegetalistas believe that taking other substances causes cutipado or, in other words, interference with the plant's energy, which can provoke unwanted reactions. The advent of pharmaceutical drugs has also increased the possibility of dangerous drug interactions with ayahuasca.

Why Do an Ayahuasca Dieta?

If you are a reasonably healthy, mentally-balanced individual who is not currently using pharmaceutical drugs that can have dangerous drug interactions with ayahuasca (which we'll get to), ignoring the dieta will not result in in bodily harm or death. In fact, you may not notice anything.

So why bother?

If you develop a continued relationship with ayahuasca, you will start to notice that the lifestyle you lead and the food you eat, can have discernible impact on your ceremonial experience. Notably, your ability to access different levels of consciousness and spiritual energies can be affected by the level of toxicity in your body and mind. Some of the most sublime energetic vibrations are also the most subtle; these are more easily experienced when you are physically and emotionally clean.

If you want go deep with this teacher plant and fully experience her profound mysteries, you want to get serious about cleansing. Here's my experience of a particularly deep cleanse during a dieta in Peru, using huancawi...

I did a 10-day ayahuasca dieta in Peru, where the shaman had us all kick off our retreat by drinking a tonic made from a purgative plant medicine called huancawi (also known as yawapanga). I spent the next eight hours crouched between a bucket and a chamber pot vomiting every half hour until yellow bile started coming out the hatch. And this was the pre-diet preparation... the ayahuasca drinking would come later that week.

The yellow bile also tasted like DEET. I used to be the poster child for DEET, since it was the only thing I found that really effectively kept biting insects away for long stretches of time. I had the intuitive hit that the DEET was getting absorbed into my body and collecting in my liver over the years, and with the help of huancawi, I was finally getting it out of my system.

I soiled three sets of clothes. I had also sprayed permethrin – a chemical insect repellant – over my clothes prior to leaving for Peru, and now I was so sensitized to insect repellant I couldn't stand putting my clothes on. The scent of it, which was odorless until I drank the huancawi, would cause me to heave. It was then that I realized how truly toxic chemical bug sprays are. I haven't used them since.

The huancawi purge is an old school Peruvian way of preparing for ayahuasca dieta, to ensure that your body is pure and your energetic channels are clear, before you begin your sacred work with the master plant.

The point of going into a deep cleanse prior to ayahuasca ceremony is to clear out any toxins from your body and mind, so that you can be open and receptive to the healing and wisdom that teacher plant has to share with you. If you don't clear them out prior, you will spend your ayahuasca ceremony clearing them out, and visions and insights you could be having will most likely be obscured by many hours of mental, physical and emotional purging, nausea, and overall discomfort. By following dietary guidelines, you will optimize your ayahuasca experience and allow yourself to go deeper into the spirit world, and receive profound psychospiritual healing.

Dietary Guidelines and Food Restrictions

Ayahuasca ceremony dietary guidelines can vary from place to place, depending on what tradition you are sitting with. In the Amazon, virtually every known ayahuasca-using culture — including indigenous cultures, mestizo shamans, syncretic churches, and modern drug therapy centers that use ayahuasca to treat addiction — incorporate some form of the dieta.

In Western-run ayahuasca retreat centers, the list of foods and things to avoid can seem long and daunting, with many items seemingly more based on folklore than science. In Brazil, while sex and alcohol are a no-no, it seems like nobody really follows any food regimen, because the prevailing attitude seems to be: You can puke over there!

I remember attending extremely long, all-night-and-well-into-the-late-morning Daime works when I lived in Ceu do Mapiá, a Santo Daime community in Amazonas, Brazil. I was really surprised when, in the middle of one of them, the church bells rang around midnight, and everyone left to go home. During that two-hour break, most people went home to eat a midnight dinner consisting of fried beef, rice and beans, a sugary dessert, accompanied by a sugary beverage, and washed down with an espresso cup of super strong, sugary sweet coffee. Then the church bells rang again, and everyone went back to church to continue the Daime work, sing hymns and drink ayahuasca for the remainder of the night. Oh, and the bathroom is that way.

However, the common denominator of the traditional ayahuasca dieta is flavorless food (no salt, sugar or spices, especially hot peppers, onions, and garlic), no sexual stimulation, no alcohol, and no pork.

Why To Avoid Tyramine-Containing Foods

Ayahuasca (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) is an MAO-inhibitor, which means it temporarily inhibits the activation of the monoamine oxidase (MAO) enzyme. This enzyme is essential to process the amino acid tyramine, so it's important to refrain from eating foods high in this amino acid, otherwise your body won't be able to process it.

This can lead to headaches, hypertension, or just hours and hours of subthreshold nausea where you feel like vomiting, but can't. And that feeling dominates your entire ayahuasca ritual, so that instead of having beautiful, celestial visions and divine downloads, you are crouched over a bucket trying to purge.

Foods that contain tyramine include:

- Pork
- Red meat
- Aged cheeses
- Fermented foods like soy sauce, fermented tofu, and sauerkraut
- Yogurt
- Alcohol
- Nutritional supplements like protein powders
- Aspartame
- Chocolate (in large amounts)
- Peanuts (in large amounts)

Many online warnings about tyramine interaction tend to sound very serious, because they are adapted from warnings about interactions with pharmaceutical MAOIs. There are nearly 100 fatalities on record from food interactions with pharmaceutical MAOIs. However, food interaction with ayahuasca is frankly not as serious a matter as it is with pharmaceutical MAOIs, because ayahuasca is a reversible (short-acting) MAOI, or RIMA. There are no fatalities on record from food interactions with ayahuasca.

Why Avoid Salty, Sugary, & Spicy Foods?

From a shamanic healing perspective, intensely-flavored food creates the *cutipado* effect that obstructs the energy of the plant medicine. Spicy foods are less likely to offend the gods and more likely to offend your throat, sinuses and buttohole as they come out. Salt and sugar tend to also come back out in a noticeably concentrated way, so that the honey sweetened tea you drank earlier, and ice cream you ate hours before that (which you are now so clear it has been pumped full of artificial flavors), appear to be regurgitating as a sickly-sweet, condensed syrupy vomit.

Why Avoid Animal Products?

These days, animal products are chock full of chemicals – from antibiotics, to hormones – and are raised and slaughtered in inhumane ways. Unless you are consuming organic, free range poultry, or wild game from the jungle, it's best to avoid any industrialized animal products.

One of the things I've noticed time and time again during ayahuasca ceremony is that we consume not only the substance of our food, but the energy of it. So if you consume an animal that was pumped full of chemicals, spent the entirety of its life miserably crammed in a pen, only to finally be slaughtered, en masse, in a mechanized way, you also ingest the energy of that animal's experience.

Consider Avoiding Rice, Lentils, Couscous & Other Granulated Foods...

You can eat these things, but it's not fun to have rice grains stuck in your sinuses from a bout of projectile vomiting. Just sayin'.

Will Juice Fasting Before Ceremony Help?

While juice fasting might seem like an obvious way to cleanse before your ayahuasca ritual, it may set you up for a suboptimal experience. Firstly, juice, even veggie juice, can contain a lot of sugar, which is something to avoid pre-ceremony. Also, an ayahuasca journey can be a physically, emotionally, and spiritually taxing experience. I personally find that having solid food several hours before the ceremony allows me to have the energy to sustain the ride. Finally, if you have no food in your system, you might find yourself really hungry in the middle of the ceremony, which can be distracting.

When Should I Have My Last Meal?

In general, you want to avoid eating less than four hours before the ceremony begins. In the very least, two hours, but you will be amazed at how much food is still undigested after two hours.

Spiritual Preparation for Ayahuasca

In the Amazon, the dieta is not only about food – it also includes guidelines for mental, emotional, and spiritual preparation in the days leading up to your work with the *Madre Ayahuasca*.

Old school ayahuasqueros would go into the forest on extended solitary retreat in order to seek and diet with the plants, surviving on their own hunting and foraging skills. In villages, it would include keeping yourself in relative solitude and minimizing idle chatter. In industrialized countries, a modern dieta would definitely include a fast from television, radio, movies, news and social media.

What you want to do is spend as many days preceding your ceremony engaged in activities like yoga, meditation, mindfulness practice, prayer and solitary walks in the woods. Begin spiritually communing with Nature before your date-night with her, when Madre flings open the doors to direct communication with Pachamama.



Why You Want to Avoid Negative Vibes Before Ayahuasca

Ayahuasca is a shamanic medicine. Beyond the fact that it is a powerful brew of psychoactive chemicals, it is traditionally used in a ceremonial container where the shaman is calling upon spirits – ancestors, animal spirits, elemental spirits – to come into the space and heal people. The person drinking ayahuasca, from a spiritual perspective, is opening up their psychic capacity to see and communicate with non-embodied beings.

In the world of Amazonian shamanism, non-embodied beings are around us at all times. In fact, in the Amazon, it's believed that each person walks around with an entourage of spirits who are connected to them in some way. Some are demonic or parasitic, and most likely associated with an addiction. Some are karmic. Others are ancestors, guides and protectors.

You can also pick up entities while going about your daily business. When your energetic field is open, as in the case in an ayahuasca ceremony, those entities can “get in” and wreck havoc in your life, whether it's through misfortune or illness. So as a general rule of thumb, to prevent this kind of thing from happening, it's good to only be in high-vibe scenarios, and avoid taking the shortcut through the bad part of town, hanging out in bars, or places of ill repute and seedy people. If you cannot avoid these locales, bolster your protective energy field through increased spiritual practice.

Why You Want to Avoid Sex (Including Sex With Yourself) Prior to Ayahuasca Ceremony

Sex and alcohol abstinence are the two most common denominators in ayahuasca diets recommended by all traditions. Sex involves a powerful energetic exchange and if you are sexually engaged with someone in the days leading up to ceremony, there is a strong likelihood that you will feel their energy in your own energetic field very strongly during ceremony. This can be confusing. It may cause you to project more than is healthy on the other person and your relationship. It might cause you to become more emotionally attached. That person you had casual sex with is now looking like “The One...”

Furthermore, sexual activity can deplete your reservoir of energy that's available to you during the ritual, which can limit the depth at which you can psychonautically journey and inhibit the plant's ability to give you guidance. This is why it's also recommended to avoid masturbating.

These restrictions on sex also include fantasizing sexually about other people.

In any case, an ayahuasca ceremony is about your spiritual work and your healing. So it's very important to keep your energy as clear, contained, and free of other people as possible.



Medical Contraindications & Dangerous Drug Interactions

This is where we leave the world of traditional dieta and address the ayahuasca safety considerations created by its globalization. Indigenous shamans did not account for pharmaceutical medications in the ayahuasca dieta, because they didn't exist in the Amazon back then, and usage is still primarily a Western phenomenon.

Mixing ayahuasca with certain pharmaceutical drugs or plant-based admixtures can be dangerous, unpleasant, and even lethal. However, it's important to note that ayahuasca-related deaths are extremely rare.

For more in-depth information on which categories of drugs are harmful to combine with ayahuasca, see the resources at the end of this document.

- **SSRI Medications.** Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), a common class of antidepressants, can theoretically amplify the physiological effects of ayahuasca, and could potentially cause serotonin syndrome in extreme cases. Many ayahuasca retreats will ask you to wean off SSRIs before a ceremony. However, there is no clinical evidence that this is a serious risk, and it may be riskier to discontinue your medications before a ceremony. Speak to your doctor if you are unsure.
- **MAOIs.** Any medication that contains MAO inhibitors (MAOIs) will significantly interact with ayahuasca and can cause severe liver and kidney impairment, severe headaches, uncontrolled hypertension, and cardiovascular issues. You should not take ayahuasca while on these medications.
- **5-MeO-DMT & *Bufo alvarius*.** The practice of smoking the secretions of the Sonoran Desert Toad, or *Bufo alvarius*, has entered shamanic circles. The secretions contain more than a dozen tryptamine compounds, the most important of which are bufotenin and 5-MeO-DMT, which may have contraindications with the harmala alkaloids in ayahuasca. At least two deaths that have been recorded in the medical literature where harmaline and 5-MeO-DMT have been found in autopsies. To avoid interactions individuals should wait at least 24 hours after ingesting ayahuasca before inhaling *Bufo alvarius*.

- **Brugmansia** a.k.a. Toé. Toé flowering shrub from the nightshade family that's closely related to datura. Also known as angel's trumpet, it is recognized by its large, golden trumpet-shaped flowers. Some ayahuasca shamans will put toé in their ayahuasca brew. Excessive use of toé can cause permanent mental impairment. Deaths can occur from miscalculated dosages.

In general, you should seek medical advice before taking ayahuasca if you have a serious heart condition, panic disorder, or mental health condition that may require specialist support.

Will You Die if You Drink Alcohol Before or After Ceremony?

So far, there are no known cases of anyone dying from mixing alcohol and ayahuasca. One of the old school ayahuasqueros I've had the good fortune of spending time with was known to drink moonshine in between cups of ayahuasca during a ritual. The ayahuasca that this tribe traditionally brews, however, tends to be very light, which is probably what makes this combination remotely feasible.

Sadly, as with the Native Americans in North America, alcoholism is a tragic legacy of colonialism that continues into the modern era. I consider this elder to be one of the last, authentic ayahuasqueros on earth, the last of eight generations of ayahuasqueros in his family, who has spent years in solitary dieta in the forest, and a master practitioner of the limpieza. At the same time, he really does like his trago.

So alcohol and ayahuasca most likely won't kill you, but drinking it before ceremony will most likely make you feel like shit. In the very least, when it comes up, you will also be acutely aware of how shitty alcohol is, not just in your puke, but in your body, in general.

What I have noticed is that the sooner I have alcohol after my ayahuasca ceremony, the shorter the ayahuasca afterglow ends up being.

Can You Smoke / Consume Weed?

Again, traditional dieta recommends that you clear out all other substances and medications before meeting Madre. However, there are churches, groups, and shamans who consume a lot of marijuana and drink a lot of ayahuasca, sometimes simultaneously. There is a lot of controversy around this practice.

My recommendation is, experience different scenarios. Experience ayahuasca ceremony in a container of weed abstinence. This will help you get to know the energy of this plant spirit.

Experience a Santa Maria Daime work where marijuana is consecrated during the concentração, and big fatties are being passed down the pews, with each member doing the sign of the cross before taking a big puff, until the entire church is hotboxed.

What are each like for you?



Ayahuasca Ceremony Preparation – The Checklist

Ideally, you want to prepare yourself as best you can for your encounter with the Madre. Like a yogi in preparation to go into a meditation retreat, you want to begin purifying your body by eliminating certain foods and drugs from your system at least 2–4 weeks prior to ceremony. For certain prescription drugs, the abstinence period may be even longer.

A good rule of thumb is to eat organic whole foods and go blandly cooked vegan.

Here is a simplified checklist to help you figure out when to cut out substances and behaviours from your life:

At least 6 weeks out:

- If your doctor has advised that it is unsafe to remain on SSRIs, or medications that affect serotonin levels, this is the time to have weaned off them.

At least 4 weeks out, during & after:

- Pharmaceutical drugs (prescription & over the counter) that are dangerous to combine with ayahuasca; this includes stimulants and MAOIs. See a full list in our resources.

At least 2 weeks prior, during, and after:

- Sex, including masturbation, virtual sex, pornography, or erotic fantasizing
- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Violent media, such as horror movies, violent action films, & news war coverage
- Recreational drugs, like LSD, MDMA, cocaine, amphetamines
- Salt, soy sauce, or foods high in salt, such as canned or processed foods
- Spicy food & hot spices (chilies, peppers)
- Pork, red meat, cured meats
- Aged cheeses
- Contraindicative herbal supplements & medicines, such as St. Johns Wort, Kava, Kratom. For a full list see our resources section, and check with your facilitator.

At least 1 week prior, during, and after:

- Overstimulating media (books, movies, TV, social media, news)
- Sugar or artificial sweeteners (stevia, aspartame, agave, honey, etc)
- Overripe fruit, especially bananas, & dried fruit
- Fermented foods (soy sauce, fermented tofu, kimchi, tempeh, and sauerkraut)
- Yeast or yeast extracts
- Vinegar or pickled foods
- Processed food (junk food, condiments, carbonated drinks)
- Caffeine (coffee, green tea, energy drinks)
- Dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurt)
- Animal fats (lard, butter)
- Oils (use olive or coconut oil sparingly)
- Nutritional supplements like protein powders
- Sweets & chocolate
- Synthetic soaps, perfumes, toiletries, etc.

Stop eating 4 hours before you expect to actually drink ayahuasca.

Ayahuasca Ceremony Preparation – the Short List

If you decided to join an ayahuasca ceremony on short notice or have had a hard time extricating yourself from the patterns of your busy, overstimulated modern life, here's the bare minimum you ought to try to do, for as many days as possible before and after:

- No sexual activity for as many days as possible
- No alcohol for as many days as possible
- No violent, negative media consumption for as many days as possible
- No pharmaceutical drugs or street drugs for as many days as possible, if it is safe to wean off them (NOTE: Some medications need weeks)
- No sugar, salt, hot spices day of
- No processed foods day of

Stop eating 4 hours before you expect to actually drink the ayahuasca.

Our Conclusions about Dieta

All in all, if you are a healthy, mentally-balanced person who isn't taking a bunch of drugs, nothing bad will happen to you if you don't follow dieta. The gods won't strike you down, and you won't suddenly keel over in a psychedelic fanfare and die. You might have more noticeably more awful shits or traumatic projectile vomits, and spend most of the ritual in the uncomfortable in-between state of wanting to puke and puking. But, not following dieta can limit the benefits you receive, such as luminous, technicolor visions, clear cosmic downloads, and undulating waves of full-body bliss for hours and hours.

So if you really want that, by following dieta you help eliminate all the crap that can get in the way... no pun intended.

Resources

Medical Contraindications with Ayahuasca:

<https://templeofthewayoflight.org/downloads/Medical-Contraindications-with-Ayahuasca.pdf>

Ayahuasca Dietary Information:

<https://templeofthewayoflight.org/integrating-ayahuasca/dietary-information/>

Foods and Medications to Avoid with MAOIs:

<http://www.ayahuasca.com/science/foods-and-meds-to-avoid-with-maois/>

MAOI Contraindications:

<https://maps.org/news-letters/v06n1/06158mao.html>

Safety for the Solitary Drinker:

<http://www.ayahuasca.com/psyche/safety-for-the-solitary-drinker/>

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