

WEDNESDAY, 2 APRIL 2008

## Interview with Akua Wood [part 1]

*After much delay, due to unreliable broadband service provider, my apologies, here is part one of an interview that Akua Wood graciously agreed to provide for my dear readers!*

Based in Sonning near Reading, Akua Wood is a native of Ghana who now lives in the UK with her 2 children and husband. She runs the twin companies **Sheabutter Cottage**, which specialises in raw ingredients for use in skincare products, and **Ciocolatina**, her own handmade skincare line.



**Question: When did you first have the idea to start your own skincare business?**

*Akua:* Back in 2002. It had been a long term ambition after realising that most of the "natural" products on the market were not moisturising enough and only had a small amount of natural ingredients.

**Q: Do you work entirely from home, or do you have a separate workshop? and do you have help with creating the products?**

*Akua:* I managed to get myself a workshop/office not far from home. However, being a mother and working on my own, I find myself working mostly from home. All the products are created and manufactured by myself.

**Q: Which product would you say is your favourite creation thus far and which is your best seller?**

*Akua:* I love concocting skin care goodies with all being favourites. Choosing one would be difficult, but I would go with the *rose face cream* because of its light texture. The best seller is the whipped shea.

**Q: What kind of ingredients do you use and what are their origins?**

*Akua:* I use lots of shea butter from Ghana. There isn't really a standard rate to pay, because quality varies so much, so I look for quality rather than looking for the cheapest.

**Q: How important is it for you support Fair Trade and what is your policy on this?**

*Akua:* Supporting fair trade is important. I am not registered with Fairtrade Association as I am still a small business, but despite this I have contributed directly to the co-operative from which I purchase the shea butter. As a native of Ghana, it is very much in my day-to-day thoughts and anything I can contribute back to hard working women and men is something I feel passionately about. My involvement in these issues will continue to grow.

**Part two of this interview will appear next week.**

*Photos appear courtesy of Shea Butter Cottage website.*

MONDAY, 7 APRIL 2008

## Interview with Akua Wood [part 2]



Continued from last week, part two of my interview conducted with Akua Wood, founder of Shea Butter Cottage and Cioccolatina skin care companies.

**Question: What is the over-riding philosophy behind the two companies?**

**Akua:** Using as many natural ingredients as possible and making products free from artificial preservatives.

**Q: Why did you choose to focus your fair trade policies in Ghana? I know that you have a background there, but I also wondered if there are any issues like trading abuses going on there?**

**Akua:** In terms of my experience, I believe that I am purchasing from grass roots level.

**Q: A prevalent view on Fair Trade is that the profit (because of the large mark up) tends to stay with the manufacturer. What do you think about that?**

**Akua:** Businesses rely on profit to re-invest, employ people and to allow for improvements in products and services. There must be some balance between profit and fair price and I think that establishing an acceptable balance is important.

**Q: And finally, how would you say your products have been received by the public?**

**Akua:** Very well. I am getting people interested in shea butter products who previously may have been sceptical. I am proud of this.

Many thanks Akua for taking time to talk with me, and thank you for contributing such wonderful creations to the skincare world!



You can read Akua's personal blog and contact her at: <http://www.akuawood.blogspot.com/>