

Falling In Love With Chocolate

Do you consider yourself a chocoholic or an occasional indulger? Chances are you enjoy the richness of chocolate, whether it's in bar form, as part of a baked good or as a liquid to warm you up on a chilly day. Although chocolate had a humble beginning, it's become one of the world's favorite sweet treats.

A brief history of chocolate

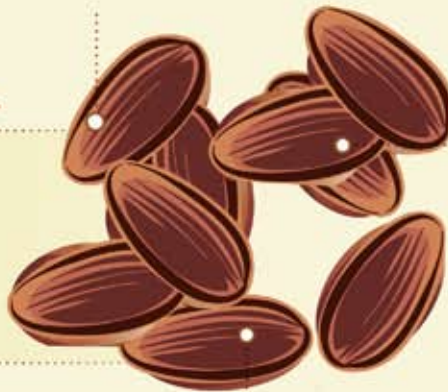
"Chocolate" comes from the Aztec word **"Xocolatl,"** meaning "bitter water."¹

People originally drank chocolate. The beans were ground into a fine powder, added to cold water and stirred. Cocoa was also added to porridge.

Theobroma cacao, the tree that grows pods and beans that are made into chocolate, was domesticated in South America near the Amazon Basin 4000 years ago.²



Become a chocolate bar connoisseur: The best tasting chocolate bar should be shiny, even and snap off cleanly when you bend off a corner of it. It should also taste creamy and rich as it melts in your mouth.³



Chocolate becomes a luxury

Chocolate houses became the "it" place for London's elite to relax and converse in 1657.

Chocolate was a beverage until J.S. Fry & Sons, a British company, made solid chocolate by adding more cocoa butter to the cocoa powder and sugar recipe.²

Chocolate money?



Although there's evidence that the Olmec in southeast Mexico used cacao as early as 600 BC, it was the Mayans in the 6th century who built

a culture around chocolate, drinking it and using the cacao beans as currency. The pods symbolized life and fertility.³

Aztec warriors drank chocolate to boost aggression and virility. They added chili peppers and corn meal to their chocolate beverages to add flavor.³

When Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés conquered the Aztecs, he continued to use cacao as currency and started his own plantation to grow this "money." He introduced the beans to Spain's king, Charles V, who mixed the bitter chocolate drink with sugar from Caribbean sugar plantations and added vanilla, cinnamon and other spices.³



Modern chocolate

Daniel Peter and Henri Nestlé added condensed milk to solid chocolate in 1875 to create milk chocolate.²

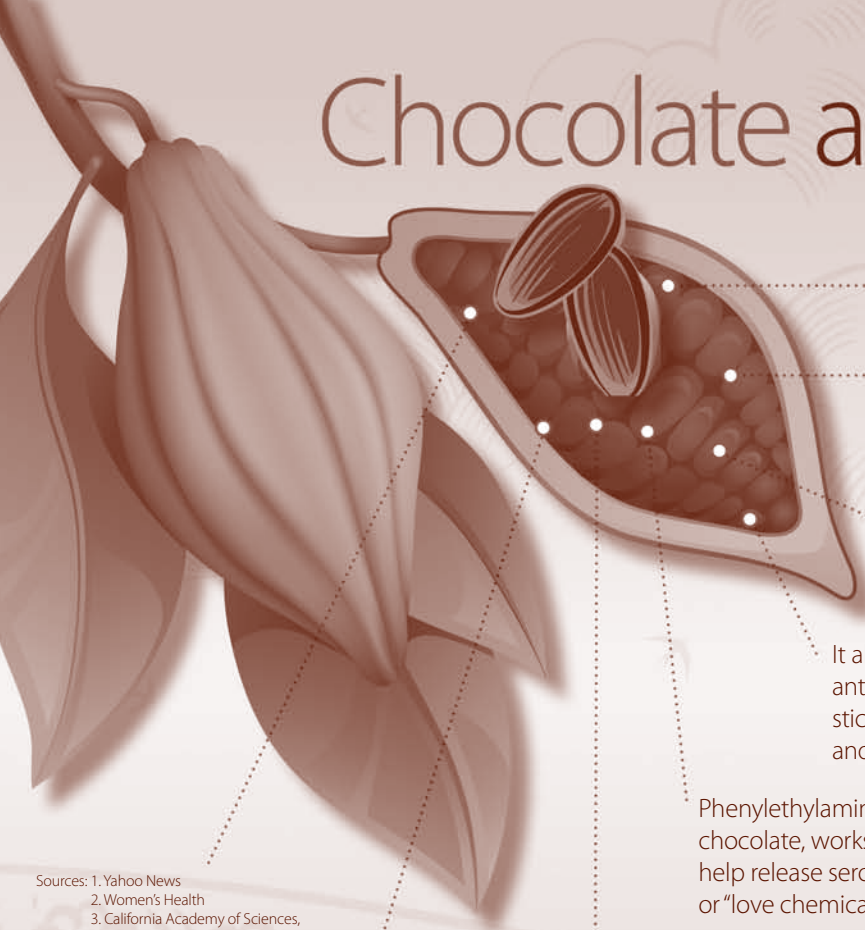
Richard Cadbury is responsible for the heart-shaped box of chocolates that has become ubiquitous with Valentine's Day. His father, John, began to mass produce them in 1868.²

Although the first chocolate factory opened in New England in the mid-1700s, chocolate was a luxury of the rich until Hershey's developed its chocolate bar in the early 1900s.



Sources: 1. Lindt
2. Yahoo News
3. Telegraph UK

Chocolate and your health



Chocolate was once a cure-all. Doctors used it to treat fevers, aid digestion and relieve pain.¹

17th century physician Henry Stubbe recommended drinking chocolate twice a day to cure the fatigue associated with hard work. He claimed that chocolate benefited the heart and increased milk production in nursing mothers.¹

Chocolate contains powerful antioxidants shown to lower your LDL, or “bad,” cholesterol.¹

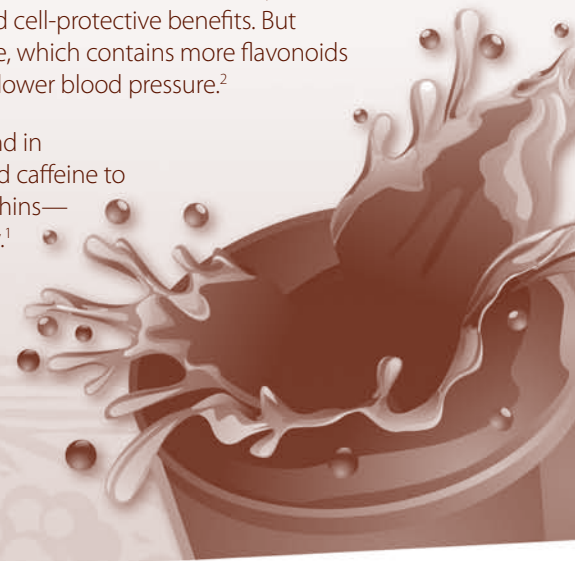
It also contains flavonoids that offer antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and cell-protective benefits. But stick to dark chocolate, which contains more flavonoids and may also help to lower blood pressure.²

Phenylethylamine, a chemical found in chocolate, works with sugar, fat and caffeine to help release serotonin and endorphins—or “love chemicals”—into the body.¹

Chocolate milk is as effective a post-workout recovery drink as sports drinks and protein shakes, and it helps athletes to relieve muscle soreness.²

Men who eat chocolate live one year longer than those who don't.³

To reap the most benefits from chocolate, eat no more than 3 ounces of dark chocolate with a cocoa content of **65%** or higher per day. Any more and you'll just gain weight.⁴



Sources: 1. Yahoo News
2. Women's Health
3. California Academy of Sciences, Chocolate: The Exhibition
4. Mayo Clinic



Can you imagine a future without chocolate?

There aren't enough current cocoa plants to keep up with production demand. The plants need tropical, humid conditions and rich soil to thrive.¹

Demand for chocolate increases by **2.5 to 3%** per year, translating to 4 million more tons of cocoa needed to meet demand each year.¹

Demand for chocolate will increase by **25%** by 2020 as more people in the developing world are able to afford it.¹

As demand increases, the cacao supply will shrink, which means there will be less chocolate for us to enjoy.

