



# Chocolate

The Fifth Food Group

And the Aztecs have it! You guessed it...chocolate. A cherished delicacy to every far-reaching corner of the planet, chocolate has rocketed to the top of many favorites lists. It all started with a man named Montezuma...

The Aztec king was extremely fond of *xocolatl* (Aztec for 'bitter water'). He was professed to have consumed as much as fifty cups a day. Of course, he did consider it to be an aphrodisiac as it was from the cocoa bean – the food of the gods.<sup>i</sup>



The adventures of Christopher Columbus led him find the cocoa bean and present them to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella after his trip to the New World. Finding nothing fascinating about the bean, it was dismissed until the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Cortez, during his campaigns on Mexico, crossed paths with Montezuma and his magic elixir. Though he and his fellow Spaniards found the drink not-so-palatable, the suggestion was made to add cane sugar. By the time his entourage made it back to Spain, a few more spices had been added – cinnamon and vanilla. It was met with great appeal. Later, the drink was served heated, much to everyone's delight.<sup>ii</sup>

Eventually, the processing of chocolate became the duty of Spanish monks. They began to spread the word of chocolate

and shortly after all of Europe became enamored with chocolate.

In the mid-nineteenth century, chocolate began to gain notoriety as a food. An English company developed chocolate into a smooth mixture as opposed to the grainy mixture that had been considered common. Later, in 1876, a Swiss gentleman decided to add milk to chocolate. Kudos to the Swiss!<sup>iii</sup>



In 1894, Milton Hershey opened the Hershey Chocolate Company in Pennsylvania. No other name in America is quite as synonymous with chocolate as Hershey.<sup>iv</sup>

But how do we derive such a tasty delight from the cocoa bean? First it begins by harvesting the bean pods from the Cacao tree. The prime harvest times are November to January and May through July.



The brownish colored ripened fruit is then hand-cut from the tree and split open. The been an pulp are removed. They are then allowed to ferment for about a week. During this time, sugar from the beans turns into alcohol. The pulp then turns completely to a dark brown liquid and drains out, leaving the beans.

The beans are then left to dry for approximately two weeks. They are then roasted. A careful process that must be careful monitored as too much – or too little – roasting can have disastrous effects on the beans. Winnowing, which

removes the hulls, occurs directly after the roasting. Once the beans have been freed from their shells, they are ground into a chocolate liquor. It is from this product that chocolate can be made. Chocolate powder can also be made from this stage.

Conching is where chocolate becomes polished into what we are familiar with. It is stirred and heated to about 180 degrees and made into a velvety smooth texture. This can last as little as a couple of hours or as long as 5 days, as is in the case of Valrhona chocolate.

**Temper, temper!**

In working with chocolate, you will find that it can be heated too

much. If this occurs, the chocolate will seize and become a crumbly mess that is practically useless.

Sharon Tyler Herbst writes about tempering chocolate in *The New Food Lover's Companion*<sup>v</sup>:

“The *classic tempering method* is to melt chocolate until it reaches a temperature of 115 degrees F. Two-thirds of the melted chocolate is then spread on a marble slab and worked back and forth with a metal spatula until it becomes thick and reaches a temperature of about 80 degrees F. This thickened chocolate is then transferred back into the remaining one-third melted chocolate and reheated to about 89 degrees

F. for semisweet chocolate, about 85 degrees F for milk or white chocolate.”

She also writes of a ‘quick’ tempering method:

The quick tempering method is to melt two-thirds of the chocolate to be tempered to a temperature of 115 degrees F then add the remaining one-third (finely chopped) chocolate to the melted mixture, stirring until the mixture has reached 89 degrees F and is smooth.

Whether baking with chocolate or just enjoying it for the gift that it is, chocolate truly is the food of the gods. I think I’ll indulge now!

Chocolate Score Card		
Unsweet, Bitter or Baking	0% Sugar	Used primarily in baking
Bittersweet	35% Liquor	Used in baking and candy making
Semisweet or sweet	15-35% Liquor	Most readily available to consumers
Milk	10% Liquor	At least 12% milk solids
Liquid	--	Made with vegetable oil and not cocoa butter and sold in liquid state
Couverture	32% Cocoa Butter	Professional quality coating that has a high gloss
Bark or Coating	0% Cocoa Butter	Flavored to act like their chocolate counterparts, but do not contain chocolate.
White		The ‘un-chocolate’. True white chocolate is made from the cocoa butter.

Information from based on THE FOOD LOVER'S COMPANION, 2nd edition, by Sharon Tyler Herbst, Barron's Educational Services, Inc. 1995

Images from <http://www.sci.mus.mn.us/sln/ff/c/cacao/cacao.html>  
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<sup>i</sup><http://eat.epicurious.com/dictionary/food/index.ssf?TERM=chocolate>  
<sup>ii</sup><http://www.karachocolates.com/chochist.html>  
<sup>iii</sup><http://www.karachocolates.com/chochist.html>  
<sup>iv</sup><http://www.hersheys.com/consumer/history.shtml>  
<sup>v</sup> Second Edition, Barron's Educational Series