

CHOCOLATE: A SHORT AND SWEET HISTORY

Name _____

Date _____

Read about the history of chocolate, then answer the questions on the following page.

We normally think of chocolate as a sweet treat, but it began as a bitter beverage! Chocolate as a food got its start in ancient times, when it wasn't a dessert — it played an important part in ritual and culture.

In ancient Latin America, chocolate was worshipped — literally! Both the Mayan and Aztec people had gods that they believed were responsible for bringing chocolate to earth. The two cultures consumed chocolate as a drink, which was popular among nobility. It was believed that the cocoa beans had magical powers, and it was used during major life events like births, marriages, and deaths.

Chocolate wasn't mixed with sugar until the Europeans came in contact with the Americas in the 1500s. They brought it home to Europe, where it became an expensive import and a symbol of wealth. Instead of chili and corn, Europeans added cinnamon and sugar to chocolate. But because chocolate was imported from another country, chocolate was available only to the upper class and became a symbol of wealth and status.

In the mid-1600s, "chocolate houses," which were like the coffee houses we have today, were a trendy meeting place for English citizens. By the 1700s, chocolate was a part of life for upper-class citizens in Europe, where it was believed to be a nutritious drink with many health benefits. Back in the American colonies, chocolate was so popular that it was included in the rations for soldiers on the battlefield in the Revolutionary War.

In the early 1800s, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing, and people quickly found ways of speeding up the chocolate-making process. In 1828, a Dutch chemist found a way to remove some of the natural fat from chocolate, which led to the creation of chocolate in food form. The first chocolate bar was made in 1847, and by 1868, a company called Cadbury began selling chocolate candies. The same year, Nestlé invented milk chocolate.



Cocoa flowers



Raw cocoa pods



Drinking chocolate

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Use what you have learned on the previous page to answer the following questions.

- 1. Which cultures were the first to consume chocolate?**
 - a. The Swiss and the Dutch
 - b. The Mayans and Aztecs
 - c. The English and the Mayans
- 2. How did chocolate become popular in Europe?**
 - a. People discovered it grew naturally there
 - b. Explorers brought it back from the Americas
 - c. A famous actor drank it
- 3. For most of its history, chocolate was mainly consumed by:**
 - a. Everyone
 - b. Peasants
 - c. The upper classes
- 4. Why was chocolate so expensive in Europe?**
 - a. It was so delicious!
 - b. It took a long time to make
 - c. It was imported from another country

Different cultures would customize their chocolate drinks with local foods and ingredients. What foods grow in your area that would taste good in hot chocolate?

Learn how to make a cold chocolate drink inspired by traditional Mayan and Aztec recipes!



MAYAN-AND AZTEC-INSPIRED COLD CHOCOLATE DRINK

Ingredients:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried cocoa beans or powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornmeal
- chili powder to taste
- vanilla to taste
- 6 cups water
- sweetener (optional)

Steps:

1. If using cocoa beans, grind to a fine powder.
2. Whisk the cocoa powder with cold water. Slowly add the cornmeal. Whisk until a froth forms.
3. Add chili powder, vanilla, and sweetener to taste.