

# Chocolate

## A History



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## Origins of Chocolate

By Aisha Khalaf and Margaret Forsyth

Today, chocolate is enjoyed worldwide as a delicious treat. It is purchased in many different venues, from the corner-store gas station straight to the most exquisite and lavish French restaurants. So where did this versatile commodity come from? Who were the first to discover its wonderful taste? The cultural and geographic origins of chocolate lay in Mesoamerica —mainly consisting of Mayan and Aztec societies —originally known as “cacao”. • Due to the level of difficulty associated with obtaining the bean and the myriad properties the bean provided, the cacao bean was a luxury item at the time and was used as a way to determine status and role in a stratified society.

The bean produced a revolutionary beverage that became a staple to the Mesoamericans and set the standard for every other region that wished to utilize the bean. The chocolate beverage was bitter and rich with a rare blend of spices. The complex concoction consisted of finely ground cacao, water, chili peppers and orejuelas to give the beverage a spicy edge, achiote (which gave it a red tint, signifying its association with life-force for which it was known), and honey as a sweetener. Together they formed a foamy, reddish, bitter beverage that held a very important status. Despite cacao being a currency in local Aztec marketplaces, it was still considered a sacred and valuable commodity, and was used in many sacred ceremonies. All subjects of the Aztec empire were required to contribute one bag of cacao per year to the Empire, and the cacao beverage was used by healers as medicine. Many times, the Aztecs would add cacao to other medicines to improve the flavor. The Aztecs also ingested psychoactive mushrooms as a sacred practice. Many times, this practice required the accompaniment of cacao as a beverage or a bean. The Aztecs would consume the cacao along with the mushrooms for the greatest psychoactive effects, for cacao can alter alertness and instill a sense of euphoria in the consumer.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Cacao leaves can move 90 degrees, from horizontal to vertical, to get sun and protect younger leaves

**Hmm**





## Medical Uses

Although cacao was most famously known for the bitter drink it produced, it was also used as a remedy for various medical ailments. In classical Aztec medicine, the bean was used as a sacred healing object in religious ceremonies. Cacao was used to treat various medical ailments and its recorded results stated that it helped invigorate the nervous system of weak patients, improve bowel function, and stimulate the kidneys.

It didn't just help internal ailments; cacao butter was also used to help heal skin irritations, burns, and cuts. It was also used as a flavouring syrup for medicine especially medicine prescribed to children to mask the unpleasant taste of medicine.



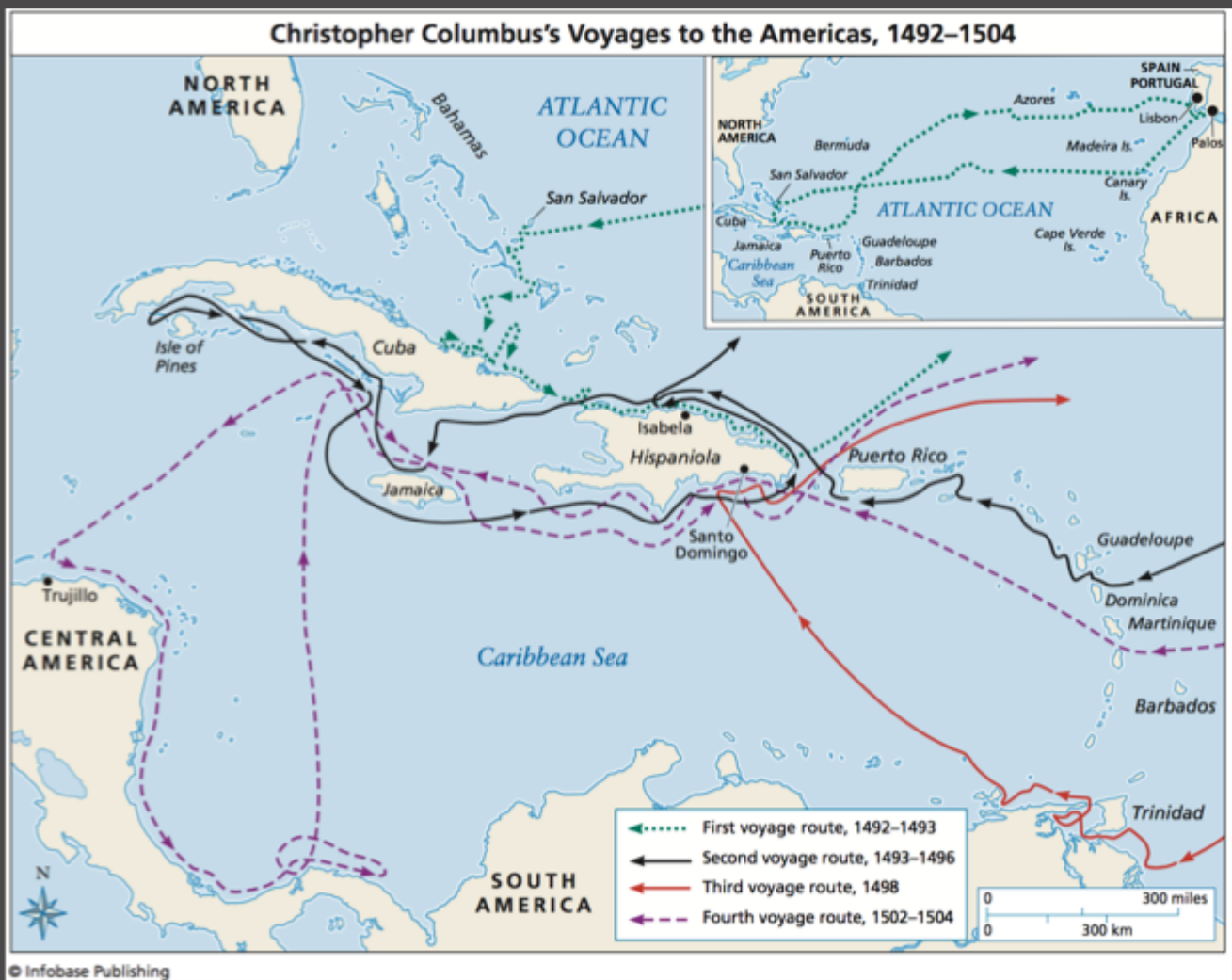
## Creating the Drink

In order to get the cacao beans to the point where they could be ground into fine powder and ingested in beverage form, the beans must first be extracted from the pod of the Cacao tree. The fruit of the pod can be eaten, and the cacao seeds extracted. The seeds are then dried in the sun. The drying process can be quite extensive, lasting up to seven days. It is crucial that the beans no longer contain any liquid when they are crushed. Once they turn a dark brown colour, they are ready to be crushed into a fine powder. The Mayans crushed the beans using a stone motor and pestle. Finally, the powder from the beans was boiled, and different ingredients added. The Mayas chose to add chile, cornmeal and possibly plantains along with vanilla extract to their cacao drink and they drank it warm.

# Migration of Chocolate

By Rowan Cress

Although we do know the basic origins of the cacao bean, its history that long ago is not that clear. However, once Christopher Columbus and his crew/fleet arrived in America the history and migration of the bean to Europe and its spread is fairly well documented. Christopher Columbus set off on his fourth trip to the New World in 1502; he brought back many exciting commodities, including the cacao bean however it was highly under-appreciated when it was first introduced to Europeans. A Spanish conquistador, by the name of Don Hernán Cortés, was the first explorer to realize the value that the cacao bean had to offer. He brought the bean back to Spain in 1528 after sailing from Cuba to the Mexican coast, landing near what is now Veracruz. During the eleven years that he and his crew were in South America they brought a lot of pain and cruelty to the indigenous people, including disease. Some of the ships that were captured from Cortés' fleet were searched for valuables and the cacao beans on board were simply discarded. Separately from the Spanish, Francesco Carletti an Italian traveler, discovered the bean and brought it back to Italy, and by the early 1600's its popularity had grown immensely.



Map documenting Columbus's Voyages (Fourth voyage discovers beans)



The daughter of Phillip II of Spain, Anne, married King Louis of France in 1615 and brought the cacao bean with her to France. Later, in 1684, France conquered Cuba and Haiti and had plantations built in order to provide the growing cacao bean market with product. In the seventeenth century the Dutch were able to capture Curacao and brought cacao beans home to Holland, this broke the Spanish monopoly on the beans and spread them further across Europe. The cacao bean reached Germany in 1646, likely brought by Italian visitors, and reached England in the mid 1600's as well, likely originating from France. As the popularity of the bean grew, the number of countries that grew them on plantations did as well, i.e. in the West Indies, Asia and Africa. As production of the bean increased the price of the commodity fell because it became more readily available to the masses. The increase in the beans popularity also meant an increase in need for labour and so the slave trade became involved when disease wiped out the original indigenous labour pool, which was already being fully exploited by plantation owners. Cacao beans were only consumed as a drink until 1828 when Charles Van Houten invented the cacao press, which was a tool used to squeeze cocoa butter from roasted beans, leaving behind a dry powder used in all chocolate products consumed today. After this invention chocolate spread quickly throughout Europe and its many colonies because it was so easily transported.

### DID YOU KNOW?

"Cacao" is how you say "Cocoa" in Spanish



**Hmm**

# Growth of Chocolate

By Sarah Campbell

When Spanish explorers came to Mesoamerica in the 1500's they were greeted by the natives with a bitter, invigorating chocolate drink. The Spanish explorers brought the drink and the cacao beans that produced it, back to Spain where the drink was used as a medicine. Due to it's bitter nature, people began to sweeten it with honey, sugar or vanilla. It was then popular to consume among the socially elite.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Benjamin Franklin  
sold chocolate in his  
print shop in  
Philadelphia

**Hmm**

This new chocolatey concoction spread through Europe's upperclass as it was still too expensive for anyone else. Along with sweetening the Mesoamerican drink, chocolate had another advance in 1820 when Coenraad van Houten invented the cocoa press. The cocoa press could extract the beans natural fat, or cocoa butter, leaving a brown powder behind. This powder could be mixed into a drink or mixed back together with the cocoa butter to create a solid bar. Coenrad van Houten has successfully created the first glimpse of our modern day chocolate bar. In 1875 Swiss chocolatier, Daniel Peter, added condensed milk to Coenraad van Houten's chocolate mix to create the first milk chocolate bar. By the 1900's, chocolate was no longer a luxury only few could afford but rather an affordable family treat. Now chocolate is a staple in homes across the world and even has a holiday that has bunnies delivering it to houses all over the world.



# Growth of Chocolate



1520

Sweetened chocolate drink  
spreads through Europe

1579

Spanish explorers bring  
cacao bean to Spain

1828

Coenraad van Houten  
invents the cocoa press

1875

Daniel Peter adds  
condensed milk to  
chocolate

1900

Chocolate is an  
affordable treat



## Cultural Significance

As stated previously, chocolate became a craze in Europe, it was viewed as a gift from the Gods in Mesoamerica. Mesoamerican's believed that a feathered serpent God call Kukulcan (Maya) or Quetzalcoatl (Aztec) brought them the Cacao tree. They worshipped the Cacao tree, using the cocoa bean as a currency, to reward soldiers after success in battle and in their sacred rituals. Although chocolate was in high demand in Europe once it was deemed an edible treat, it did not hold the importance that was imposed on it in Mesoamerica.

Since the cocoa bean travelled to Europe it has been a job source for many people. Unfortunately, the early years of chocolate's history are filled with slave labour. Slaves were sent from Africa to South America, where the Cacao tress naturally grew, to harvest and cultivate the cocoa beans. As the world progressed away from slavery, Cacao trees were planted in Africa, where the climate matched that of Mesoamerica and farming villages emerged. Around six million people rely on farming cocoa to sustain their livelihood. In the last couple of decades the need for chocolate has fluctuated, making the farming business unstable at times. The fluctuation in demand for cocoa products and the rise and fall in price means that it is impossible for farmers to have a steady rate of pay. This has created a push for sustainable and fair trade products to be released to the public for consumption.

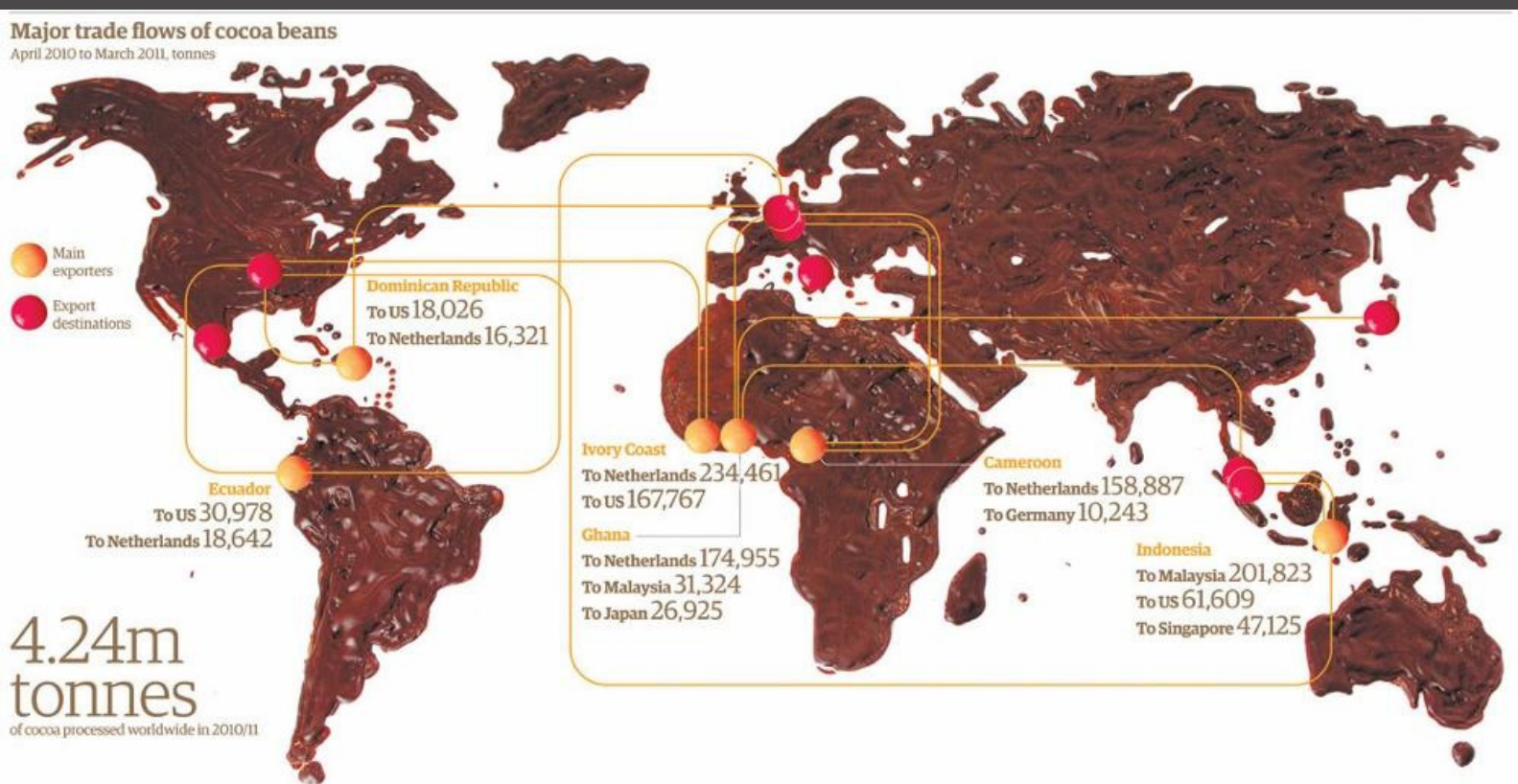
## DID YOU KNOW?

An Indonesian cocoa farming community built a giant statue of hands holding a cocoa pod

**Hmm**



# Fair Trade and Slave Labour



## DID YOU KNOW?

German Chocolate Cake was named after Sam German, who developed a sweet bar for Baker's Chocolate, and was not from Germany

Hmm

The need for Fair Trade companies is growing around the world, from companies like Starbucks advertising Fair Trade coffee beans, to clothing, consumers want to know where their products are coming from and the circumstances as well. Chocolate is no exception. Fair Trade simply means that a fair wage is being paid to those who provide the produces for consumers. Fair Trade has the most impact on third world countries that have poor or no employee wage regulations. Many cocoa farmers earn little more than \$1.25 USD a day, well below the poverty line. Cocoa farmers receive approximately 6% of the price that consumers pay for chocolate. This is, in part, due to the recent decrease in cocoa sales. Families rely on the income from farming and with the fluctuating prices of cocoa, their incomes are unstable. Many companies have vowed to look to fair trade for their cocoa products however there are still many large name chocolate companies that have yet to acknowledge the conditions their farmers work in.

Insufficient wages cause serious violations of human and labour rights. Along with poor wages, the conditions that farmers and cultivators work in is extreme. Due to the low income farmers make they are unable to provide their workers with acceptable wages and accommodations. Much like other foods, the trees and sprayed with pesticides that workers regularly come into contact with, with improper equipment. Lack of facilities and basic rights like water make the extensive hours they work even more gruelling. These work conditions often lead to farmers breaching human rights and labour laws that have been set in place by the International Labour Organization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In attempts to keep production costs low cocoa farmers turn to children to work.

This reduces the cost of production but keeps children away from school and working in poor and sometimes abusive conditions. Tulane University's 2015 report on child labour showed that approximately 2 million children are working on cocoa farms in Ghana and Ivory Coast alone and more than 500,000 of them are working in abusive conditions. Most of these children are working on farms with their families to help provide a income which is, by the standards of the International Labour Organization, normal. However, it is considered a breach of the labour laws when the work negatively impacts the child's physical or mental health, or keeps them away from their education. Children are often tasked with cutting the cocoa pods away from the pesticide treated tree using large machetes. There have been significant improvements, including the push for fair trade, there is still signs of child labour throughout the chocolate industry, particularly in Ivory Coast. Children are often trafficked from neighbouring countries and sold at low prices for use as cheap labour. Child trafficking is a serious issue that unquestionably breaks the laws set by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is prohibited under the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child. The chocolate industry vowed to end child labour by 2005 and signed the 2001 voluntary Harkin-Engel Protocol. Unfortunately the 2005 deadline has been pushed backwards many times. The Tulane University reported in 2015 that 1.5 million children still need to be removed from dangerous work by 2020 in order for the chocolate industry to complete the Harkin-Engel Protocol.

## DID YOU KNOW?

*Theobroma Cacao* is the tree that produces cocoa beans, it means 'food of the Gods'



**Hmm**



# Position of Chocolate

By Emily Hulko

## DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to tending cacao trees, families may also harvest bananas or other fruit

Hmm

Nowadays people want to be able to enjoy their favourite treats without the associated guilt that follows. Many people are persuaded by the idea that health and indulgence can go hand in hand with one another, which is why we see many people indulge in dark chocolate because of its potential health benefits (1). Chocolate has been endorsed as a health food that may help to ward off cardiovascular disease as well as help to improve your memory. Some observational studies have linked chocolate consumption to reductions in heart disease and dementia. It has been found that these benefits are because of a bioactive compound that occurs naturally in the cocoa bean called flavonoids. It has been shown in several clinical trials that flavonoids consumed in high levels can relax blood vessels and stimulate blood flow to the brain. However, more evidence is required to determine whether or not



flavonoids can protect against heart attack and stroke. The flavonoids found in cocoa beans have antioxidant effects that can help reduce cell damage that can be a result of heart disease. Chocolate is made from cocoa solids, cocoa fat and other ingredients. Cocoa solids contain the richest source of flavonoids because it is the non-fat part of the cocoa bean. On the other hand, the cocoa fat lacks these bioactive compounds. Dark chocolate is the best source for flavonoids which is why many people indulge in this particular type of chocolate over others because they believe in the health benefits associated with it. Dark chocolate has a high proportion of cocoa powder which is where flavonoids are found. Since milk chocolate contains more sugar and less cocoa powder, it is lower in flavonoids. This is why dark chocolate is marketed more as a health food than the other types of chocolate. White Chocolate is not technically a chocolate and therefore has no flavonoids whatsoever. In order to obtain a high concentration of flavonoids, the chocolate must be made with a high concentration of cocoa nibs. The high temperatures used to make chocolate can destroy the flavonoids in the process. There is changing perception about chocolate, specifically dark chocolate as a health food. The claims made by the media about the benefits of chocolate are based on studies that are funded by major chocolate companies such as Cadbury and Hersey. This creates a bias as to whether or not these claims are true or not. Commercial chocolate like Cadbury and Hersey's add fat, sugar and additional calories which lead to weight gain, high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. This shows us why the perception of chocolate as a health food is beginning to change. People are beginning to realize that the added ingredients and the way in which chocolate is made are really reducing/destroying the component of chocolate that really does carry the health benefits. Slowly now, people are realizing that sometimes health and indulgence don't go hand in hand after all.





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