The History of Chocolate

Chocolate bars. Chocolate ice cream. Chocolate milk. Delicious!
But where does chocolate come from?

Chocolate is made from the fruit of cacao trees, starting about 10 million years ago. The Olmecs of Mexico were probably the first to grow the cacao plant. It is thought that they used the cacao beans to make drinks, but there is no written history for the Olmecs.

The Olmecs passed their cacao knowledge to the Ancient Maya of Mexico and Central America, who made chocolate into a spicy drink used in ceremonies. Cacao started to become very precious. Later the Aztecs used cacao for trade and the cacao seeds as a form of money.

In 1502, Christopher Columbus was the first European explorer to come into contact with cacao beans when he and his crew captured a trade ship. He presumed the beans were a type of almond and brought them back to Europe, not knowing the potential value of the unusual beans.

The Spanish Conquistador, Hernán Cortés, arrived in Central America in 1519. There he saw the Aztec Emperor drinking 'Xocalatl', the earliest known hot chocolate, and Cortés realised the great value that it had. Almost ten years later, Cortés established a cacao plantation for trading. He took the beans back to Spain along with the chocolate drink recipe. Here, cinnamon and other spices were added to the bitter brew and it was sweetened with sugar.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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In 1657, the first chocolate house was opened in London. Cacao was an expensive import and only the rich could afford to drink chocolate. In fact, in France, chocolate could be drunk only by the royal family.

Up until the 1700s, chocolate was mainly a drink, but in 1830 the first real, moulded chocolate bar was produced. By the late 19th century, chocolate companies such as Cadbury were mass-producing boxes of chocolates.

Today, chocolate is a multi-billion dollar industry and people all over the world love the taste of chocolate. This is an industry that will not go away any time soon. You can even make your own!



Did you know...?

To make a good chocolate you only need four ingredients: cocoa beans, cocoa butter, sugar and milk powder.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Before reading activity match up

REALISE

ESTABLISH

PASS

CAPTURE

GROW

MASS-PRODUCE



CULTIVATE
A SPECIFC CROP
OR PLANT



to give something, like
an object or skill,



to start something
that will last for a
long time,



to understand a situation,
sometimes suddenly



act of catching, winning,
or gaining control by force,
or stratagem



to make something in large
quantities, usually by machine.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1. Who were the first to grow the cacao plant? Tick one.

   - ○ the ancient Maya
   - ○ the Olmec
   - ○ Christopher Columbus

2. True or False? The Aztecs used cacao seeds as a form of money.

   - ○ True
   - ○ False

3. Who was the first European explorer to come into contact with cacao beans? What did he think it was?

   _____

   _____

4. Fill in the missing words.
   Hernán Cortés saw the Aztec Emperor drinking 'Xocalatl', also known as

   _____.

5. How did the Spanish make the bitter cacao drink tastier?

   _____

6. Where was the first chocolate house opened? _____

7. Up until the 1700s, why could only the rich afford to drink hot chocolate?

   _____

   _____

8. When was the first chocolate bar produced to eat? Tick one.

   - ○ 1830
   - ○ By the late 19th century
   - ○ 1657

9. Find and copy the term used for 'producing large quantities'.

   _____

10. What ingredients would you need to make your own chocolate?

    _____

    _____

LIVEWORKSHEETS