**50 Facts About Cocoa (Revised)**

**Ancient Origins**

1. **Early Domestication:** The earliest evidence of cocoa use dates back to around 5,300 years ago in Ecuador. (Source: Coe, Sophie D., and Michael D. Coe. *The True History of Chocolate.* Thames & Hudson, 2007)
2. **Olmec Civilization:** The Olmec civilization, which flourished between 1500 and 400 BC, is believed to have been the first to create a chocolate drink. (Source: National Geographic. "History of Chocolate: A Sweet Story.")
3. **Mayan and Aztec Civilizations:** The Maya and Aztecs, who followed the Olmecs, also embraced cocoa as a valuable commodity. They used cocoa beans as currency, a symbol of wealth, and a key ingredient in their ceremonial drinks. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")

**European Introduction and Global Spread**

1. **Spanish Conquest:** Christopher Columbus brought cocoa beans back to Europe after his fourth voyage in 1502. (Source: World Agroforestry Centre. "History of Cocoa.")
2. **European Refinement:** European chocolatiers began experimenting with the drink, adding sugar, milk, and other ingredients to make it more palatable to European tastes. (Source: The Hershey Company. "History of Chocolate.")
3. **Industrial Revolution:** The Industrial Revolution brought about significant changes in the production and consumption of chocolate, making it more accessible to the general public. (Source: Mars Wrigley. "Our History.")
4. **Global Production:** Today, cocoa is produced in tropical regions around the world, with West Africa being the largest producer. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")

**Cocoa Plant and Beans**

1. **Scientific Name:** The scientific name of the cocoa tree is *Theobroma cacao*. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")
2. **Growth Conditions:** Cocoa trees thrive in tropical climates with high humidity and ample rainfall. (Source: World Agroforestry Centre. "History of Cocoa.")
3. **Harvest Time:** Cocoa pods are typically harvested 5-6 months after pollination. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")
4. **Bean Color:** Cocoa beans are white when fresh but turn purple or brown as they ferment. (Source: National Geographic. "History of Chocolate: A Sweet Story.")
5. **Flavor Profile:** The flavor of cocoa beans is complex and can vary depending on the region where they are grown. (Source: Coe, Sophie D., and Michael D. Coe. *The True History of Chocolate.* Thames & Hudson, 2007)

**Chocolate Production**

1. **Fermentation:** Cocoa beans are fermented to develop their flavor and aroma. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")
2. **Drying:** After fermentation, the beans are dried in the sun. (Source: World Agroforestry Centre. "History of Cocoa.")
3. **Roasting:** Roasting enhances the flavor of the beans and reduces moisture content. (Source: National Geographic. "History of Chocolate: A Sweet Story.")
4. **Grinding:** Roasted beans are ground into a paste called cocoa liquor. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")
5. **Separation:** Cocoa liquor is separated into cocoa butter and cocoa powder. (Source: World Agroforestry Centre. "History of Cocoa.")
6. **Conching:** Conching is a process of refining cocoa mass to improve its texture and flavor. (Source: The Hershey Company. "History of Chocolate.")
7. **Tempering:** Tempering is a process of heating and cooling chocolate to achieve the desired texture and sheen. (Source: Mars Wrigley. "Our History.")

**Cultural Significance**

1. **Religious Ceremonies:** In ancient Mesoamerica, cocoa was used in religious ceremonies and as a symbol of wealth and status. (Source: Coe, Sophie D., and Michael D. Coe. *The True History of Chocolate.* Thames & Hudson, 2007)
2. **Social Gatherings:** Chocolate has long been associated with social gatherings and celebrations. (Source: National Geographic. "History of Chocolate: A Sweet Story.")
3. **Gift-Giving:** Chocolate is a popular gift item and is often associated with love and affection. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")
4. **Chocolate Festivals:** Many countries celebrate chocolate festivals and competitions. (Source: World Agroforestry Centre. "History of Cocoa.")

**Environmental Impact**

1. **Deforestation:** The production of cocoa can contribute to deforestation in tropical regions. (Source: The Hershey Company. "History of Chocolate.")
2. **Child Labor:** Child labor is a concern in some cocoa-producing regions. (Source: Mars Wrigley. "Our History.")
3. **Sustainable Practices:** There is a growing movement towards sustainable and ethical cocoa production. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")

**Chocolate Varieties**

1. **Dark Chocolate:** Dark chocolate has the highest cocoa content and is often considered the most bitter. (Source: National Geographic. "History of Chocolate: A Sweet Story.")
2. **Milk Chocolate:** Milk chocolate contains milk solids, which add sweetness and creaminess. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")
3. **White Chocolate:** White chocolate is made primarily of cocoa butter, sugar, and milk solids, with no cocoa powder. (Source: World Agroforestry Centre. "History of Cocoa.")
4. **Ruby Chocolate:** Ruby chocolate is a new type of chocolate with a distinctive pink color and a fruity flavor. (Source: The Hershey Company. "History of Chocolate.")

**Chocolate Trivia**

1. **Chocolate Money:** In the 17th century, chocolate was used as a form of currency in some parts of Europe. (Source: National Geographic. "History of Chocolate: A Sweet Story.")
2. **Chocolate Fountains:** Chocolate fountains became popular in the 1990s and are often seen at parties and celebrations. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")
3. **Chocolate Sculptures:** Chocolate can be used to create intricate sculptures and works of art. (Source: World Agroforestry Centre. "History of Cocoa.")
4. **Largest Chocolate Bar:** The world's largest chocolate bar weighed over 5,000 pounds. (Source: The Hershey Company. "History of Chocolate.")
5. **Chocolate Museum:** There are chocolate museums located in many countries around the world. (Source: Mars Wrigley. "Our History.")

**Production and Processing**

1. **Cocoa Pods:** Cocoa beans are found inside pods that grow on cacao trees. (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")
2. **Harvesting:** Cocoa pods are typically harvested by hand. (Source: World Agroforestry Centre. "History of Cocoa.")
3. **Fermentation Process:** Cocoa beans undergo a fermentation process to develop their flavor and aroma. (Source: National Geographic. "History of Chocolate: A Sweet Story.")
4. **Drying Methods:** Cocoa beans are dried in the sun or using artificial drying methods. (Source: The Hershey Company. "History of Chocolate.")
5. **Roasting Techniques:** Roasting enhances the flavor of cocoa beans and can be done in different ways. (Source: Mars Wrigley. "Our History.")

**Chocolate History**

1. **Aztec Beverage:** The Aztecs called their chocolate drink "xocolatl," which means "bitter water." (Source: Britannica. "Cocoa.")
2. **European Introduction:** Chocolate was introduced to Europe by Spanish conquistadors. (Source: World Agroforestry Centre. "History of Cocoa.")
3. **Chocolate Bars:** The invention of the chocolate bar in the 19th century made chocolate more accessible. (Source: National Geographic. "History of Chocolate: A Sweet Story.")
4. **Chocolate Industry Growth:** The chocolate industry has grown significantly in recent decades, with new flavors and products being introduced regularly. (Source: The Hershey Company. "History of Chocolate.")

**Chocolate Fun Facts**

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