History

Cocoa was first consumed over 5000 years ago by many Mesoamerican civilizations. Some of the best known include the Olmec, Aztec, Mayans, and Inca. The modern word “chocolate” was even born from the Aztec language of Nahuatl.

Eventually the Spanish, after all of their conquering of South America, took the wonder seed back to their homeland where they pumped it up with sugar and species to create a much more sweet and enjoyable treat. Chocolate then became so popular that it spread across Europe like wildfire. From then on, every culture put their own little spin on the famous bar, making a wide variety of delicate treats for everyone to savor.

Health

One of the largest health benefits to cocoa is it is one of the richest sources of polyphenols. Polyphenols have numerous benefits including lower blood sugar, prevent risk of heart disease and blood clots, and protect against cancer.

Cocoa is also helpful with mental health! It is a natural anti-depressant that help boost the neurotransmitters that release dopamine, serotonin, and endorphins. We’ve also associated the taste of chocolate to happy times since childhood, which helps relax the mind.

Unfortunately in our highly-processed foods society, a lot of the pure, natural minerals and vitamins get cooked out when processed. So as with everything, moderation is key to true health.

Facts

Did you know?

The cocoa beans, the main ingredient for chocolate, come for a giant seed from the cacao tree, which is native to the Amazon Rainforest.

When chocolate was first consumed by humans, It was of a much more bitter variety. But regardless, that didn’t stop the love for the seed. They had a variety of uses for the cocoa; they made drinks, wages to pay their soldiers, in religions ceremonies, and even as currency.

There are three varieties of the cocoa plant; Criollo, Foastero, and Trinitario. There was a fourth species, but experts believe it to be extinct since 1916.