

= Hot chocolate =

Hot chocolate , also known as hot cocoa , drinking chocolate or just cocoa is a heated beverage consisting of shaved chocolate , melted chocolate or cocoa powder , heated milk or water , and often sugar . Hot chocolate made with melted chocolate is sometimes called drinking chocolate , characterized by less sweetness and a thicker consistency .

The first chocolate beverage is believed to have been created by the Aztecs around 2 @, @ 000 years ago , and a cocoa beverage was an essential part of Aztec culture by 1400 AD . The beverage became popular in Europe after being introduced from Mexico in the New World and has undergone multiple changes since then . Until the 19th century , hot chocolate was even used medicinally to treat ailments such as liver and stomach diseases . Today , hot chocolate is consumed throughout the world and comes in multiple variations , including the spiced chocolate para mesa of Latin America , the very thick cioccolata densa served in Italy and chocolate a la taza served in Spain , and the thinner hot cocoa consumed in the United States .

= = History = =

An early Classic period (460 @-@ 480 AD) Mayan tomb from the site of Rio Azul , Guatemala , had vessels with the Maya glyph for cacao on them with residue of a chocolate drink .

To make the chocolate drink , which was served cold , the Maya ground cocoa seeds into a paste and mixed it with water , cornmeal , chili peppers , and other ingredients . They then poured the drink back and forth from a cup to a pot until a thick foam developed . Chocolate was available to Maya of all social classes , although the wealthy drank chocolate from elaborately decorated vessels .

What the Spaniards then called " chocolatl " was said to be a beverage consisting of a chocolate base flavored with vanilla and other spices that was served cold .

Because sugar was yet to come to the Americas , xocolatl was said to be an acquired taste . The drink tasted spicy and bitter as opposed to sweetened modern hot chocolate . As to when xocolatl was first served hot , sources conflict on when and by whom . However , Jose de Acosta , a Spanish Jesuit missionary who lived in Peru and then Mexico in the later 16th century , described xocolatl as :

Loathsome to such as are not acquainted with it , having a scum or froth that is very unpleasant taste . Yet it is a drink very much esteemed among the Indians , where with they feast noble men who pass through their country . The Spaniards , both men and women , that are accustomed to the country , are very greedy of this Chocolate . They say they make diverse sorts of it , some hot , some cold , and some temperate , and put therein much of that " chili " ; yea , they make paste thereof , the which they say is good for the stomach and against the catarrh .

= = = European adaptation = = =

After defeating Montezuma 's warriors and demanding that the Aztec nobles hand over their valuables , Cortés returned to Spain in 1528 , bringing cocoa beans and chocolate drink making equipment with them . At this time , chocolate still only existed in the bitter drink invented by the Mayas . Sweet hot chocolate and bar chocolate were yet to be invented .

After its introduction to Europe , the drink slowly gained popularity . The court of King Charles V soon adopted the drink , and what was then only known as " chocolate " became a fashionable drink popular with the Spanish upper class . Additionally , cocoa was given as a dowry when members of the Spanish Royal Family married other European aristocrats . At the time , chocolate was very expensive in Europe because the cocoa beans only grew in South America .

Sweet @-@ tasting hot chocolate was then invented , leading hot chocolate to become a luxury item among the European nobility by the 17th century . Even when the first Chocolate House (an establishment similar to a modern coffee shop) opened in 1657 , chocolate was still very expensive , costing 50 to 75 pence (approximately 10 @-@ 15 shillings) a pound .

In the late 17th century , Hans Sloane , president of the Royal College of Physicians , visited Jamaica . There , he tried chocolate and considered it " nauseous " , but found it became more palatable when mixed with milk . When he returned to England , he brought the recipe with him , introducing milk chocolate to England .

In 1828 , Coenraad Johannes van Houten developed the first cocoa powder producing machine in the Netherlands . The press separated the greasy cocoa butter from cacao seeds , leaving a purer chocolate powder behind . This powder , much like instant cocoa powder used today , was easier to stir into milk and water . As a result , another very important discovery was made : solid chocolate . By using cocoa powder and low amounts of cocoa butter , it was then possible to manufacture bar chocolate . The term " chocolate " then came to mean solid chocolate , rather than hot chocolate .

= = Terminology = =

A distinction is sometimes made between " hot cocoa " , made from powder made by removing most of the rich cocoa butter from the ground cacao beans , and " hot chocolate " , made directly from bar chocolate , which already contains cocoa , sugar , and cocoa butter . Thus , the major difference between the two is the cocoa butter , the absence of which makes hot cocoa significantly lower in fat than hot chocolate while still preserving all the antioxidants found in chocolate .

Hot chocolate can be made with dark , semisweet , or bittersweet chocolate chopped into small pieces and stirred into milk with the addition of sugar . American instant hot cocoa powder often includes powdered milk or other dairy ingredients so it can be made without using milk . In the United Kingdom , " hot chocolate " is a sweet chocolate drink made with hot milk or water , and powder containing chocolate , sugar , and powdered milk . " Cocoa " usually refers to a similar drink made with just hot milk and cocoa powder , then sweetened to taste with sugar (or not sweetened at all) .

= = Usage = =

Today , hot chocolate in the form of drinking chocolate or cocoa is considered a comfort food and is widely consumed in many parts of the world .

= = = Europe = = =

In mainland Europe (particularly Spain and Italy) , hot chocolate is sometimes served very thick due to the use of a thickening agent such as cornstarch . Among the multiple thick forms of hot chocolate served in Europe is the Italian cioccolata densa . German variations are also known for being very thick and heavy .

Hot chocolate with churros is the traditional working @-@ man 's breakfast in Spain . This style of hot chocolate can be extremely thick , often having the consistency of warm chocolate pudding . In the Netherlands , hot chocolate is a very popular drink , known as chocolademelk , it is often served at home or in cafes . In France , hot chocolate is often served at breakfast time ; sometimes sliced bread spread with butter , jam , honey , or Nutella is dunked into the hot chocolate . There are also brands of hot chocolate specially formulated for breakfast time , notably Banania .

Even further variations of hot chocolate exist . In some cafes in Belgium and other areas in Europe , one who orders a " warme chocolade " or " chocolat chaud " receives a cup of steaming white milk and a small bowl of bittersweet chocolate chips to dissolve in the milk . Particularly rich hot chocolate is often served in demitasse cups .

= = = North America = = =

In the United States , the drink is popular in instant form , made with hot water or milk from a packet containing mostly cocoa powder , sugar , and dry milk . This is the thinner of the two main variations . It is very sweet and may be topped with marshmallows , whipped cream , or a piece of solid

chocolate . Hot chocolate was first brought to North America as early as the 17th century by the Dutch , but the first time colonists began selling hot chocolate was around 1755 . Traditionally , hot chocolate has been associated with cold weather , winter , and dessert in the United States .

In Mexico , hot chocolate remains a popular national drink . Besides the instant powder form , traditional Mexican hot chocolate includes semi @-@ sweet chocolate , cinnamon , sugar , and vanilla . Hot chocolate of this type is commonly sold in circular or hexagonal tablets which can be dissolved into hot milk , water , or cream , and then blended until the mixture develops a creamy froth . Mexican cinnamon hot chocolate is traditionally served alongside a variety of Mexican pastries known as pan dulce or with churros .

= = = South America = = =

In Colombia , a hot chocolate beverage made with milk and water using a chocolatera and molinillo is enjoyed as part of breakfast with bread and soft , fresh farmers cheese . The chocolate bars used in the preparation come with granulated sugar mixed in , and sometimes have flavors such as cinnamon , cloves and vanilla added to the chocolate .

In Peru , hot chocolate can be served with panettone at breakfast on Christmas Day , even though summer has already started in the southern hemisphere . This tradition began in Cuzco ; for this reason typical brands of chocolate bars are from this cocoa @-@ producing region . Another region which produces best @-@ quality cacao is the San Martin Region in the north Peruvian rainforest .

= = Health = =

Although hot chocolate is generally consumed for pleasure , the beverage confers several potential health benefits . A 2003 study from Cornell University found that cocoa contains large amounts of antioxidants that may help prevent cancer . Also , it has been demonstrated that the cocoa bean helps with digestion . From the 16th to 19th centuries , hot chocolate was valued as a medicine as well as a drink .

The explorer Francisco Hernández wrote that chocolate beverages helped treat fever and liver disease . Another explorer , Santiago de Valverde Turices , believed that large amounts of hot chocolate were helpful in treating chest ailments and that smaller amounts could help stomach disorders . When chocolate was introduced to the French in the 17th century , it was reportedly used " to fight against fits of anger and bad moods " , which may be attributed to chocolate 's phenylethylamine content . Today , hot chocolate is consumed for pleasure rather than medicinally , but new research suggests that there may be other health benefits attributed to the drink .

On the other hand , several negative effects can be attributed to drinking hot chocolate , as some hot chocolate recipes contain high amounts of sugar , hydrogenated oils , or fats .

= = = Benefits = = =

Research has shown that the consumption of hot chocolate can be positive to one 's health . A study conducted by Cornell University has shown that hot chocolate contains more antioxidants than wine and tea , therefore reducing the risk of heart disease . In a single serving of cocoa , the researchers found 611 milligrams of gallic acid equivalents (GAE) and 564 milligrams of epicatechin equivalents (ECE) , compared with 340 milligrams of GAE and 163 milligrams of ECE in red wine , and 165 milligrams of GAE and 47 milligrams of ECE in green tea . Chang Yong Lee , the professor and researcher at Cornell who conducted the study , revealed that larger amounts of antioxidants are released when the beverage is heated .

The flavonoids found in the cocoa that makes up hot chocolate also have a positive effect on arterial health . A particular study performed by the National Institutes of Health partially supported by Mars Chocolate company showed high amounts of improvement in blood flow after drinking a flavanol @-@ rich cocoa beverage . In the study , the subjects (27 people ages 18 to 72) drank a cocoa drink containing 900 milligrams of flavonols every day , which resulted in an improvement in

blood flow and the function of endothelial cells that line blood vessels .

In further studies conducted by Dr. Norman K. Hollenberg , professor of medicine at Brigham and Women 's Hospital and Harvard Medical School found that flavonols may also help vessels dilate and help keep platelets from clustering on the blood vessel walls . Flavonoids found in hot chocolate are beneficial to health mainly because they shield the walls of blood vessels from free radical damage . Flavanols are also thought to help reduce blood platelet buildup and can balance levels of compounds called eicosanoids , which may be beneficial to cardiovascular health .

= = = Risks = = =

Several negative effects may be attributed to the drinking of hot chocolate . The types and severity of health risks vary between different styles of hot chocolate . Hot chocolate made from milk also contains the sugars naturally found in milk . Processed cocoa powder usually contains additional sugars . Some brands also contain hydrogenated oils and fats , the most common of which are coconut derivatives .