



Chocolate

Chocolate (*Theobroma cacao*) is an ancient food originating in Olmec culture of Mesoamerica as a bitter drink of cacao beans, water, vanilla, and chili. Spaniards, in the 17th century, replaced the chilies with sugar which quickly spread through noble circles. Soon the French, English, and Dutch started cultivating cacao in their Caribbean colonies using slave labor.

Chocolate begins as a collection of seeds in a fruit pod. Separated from their pith, the seeds are fermented in piles for a week, then dried, before being roasted for market. Chocolate is native to Central and South America, but now can be found all along the equator in Africa and SE Asia.

Fun Facts: Because of their small size, only one in 500 flowers are pollinated to make a cocoa pod. This means a single tree only produces 10-20 standard chocolate bars annually!

Modern chocolate was invented in the 1820s when a Dutch chocolate baker separated the nib from the bean. The nib is rich in cocoa butter and the bean is crushed, mixed with alkaline salts and is renamed cocoa powder. This process makes the chocolate powder mix more easily with water.

Quality milk chocolate contains cocoa powder, cocoa butter, sugar, and powdered milk. Many national brands substitute these ingredients with a variety of preservatives, colorings and fats to reduce production costs.

White chocolate contains no cocoa powder but is rich in cocoa butter which gives it its signature color. Milk and sugar are added resulting in a product that is high in sugar, fat, and calories.

Chocolate (70% or greater cacao content) is rich in the minerals iron and magnesium as well as heart healthy flavanols. Flavanols have been shown to support the production of nitric oxide, supporting cardiovascular health.

FYI: 70% of the world's chocolate comes from impoverished West Africa where unregulated child labor has become a concern. This practice is far less common in Latin America; to further reduce the likelihood that your chocolate was harvested by youth, purchase Fair Trade or Rainforest Certified. These non-profits aim to support marginalized producers and workers in developing countries as well as supporting ecological responsibility.



Food
of the Month
February 2022

Blueberry and Pepita Dark Chocolate Bark

Ingredients

Original:

- 1 pound dark chocolate (70%)
- 1/2 cup dried blueberries
- 1/2 cup pumpkin seeds, toasted
- 1/2 cup unsweetened coconut flakes

Texture Modified:

- 1 pound dark chocolate (70%)
- 1/4 cup blueberry preserves
- 1/4 cup pumpkin seed butter, warmed
- 1/4 cup coconut flour



We all crave sweet desserts! This recipe combines the superfoods dark chocolate, blueberries, pumpkin seeds, and coconut into a high fiber, low sugar treat.

Instructions:

1. Chop chocolate and place in a bowl above simmering water (do not let the bowl touch the water) allow to melt gently, stirring a few times.
2. While chocolate is melting, line a large cookie sheet with parchment paper.
3. Before chocolate fully melts, take off heat and stir with a rubber spatula until completely melted. Pour onto prepared sheet pan and spread to about 1/8 inch thickness.
4. Sprinkle with the toppings and allow to set for five minutes gently pressing the toppings down with rubber spatula.
5. Once cooled, break into pieces and store in covered container. Can be refrigerated or frozen.



*Original recipe by
Chef Michael Hannah*

