

We Love Chocolate!



Mini Fact:

People buy more than 36 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolates for Valentine's Day.

Is chocolate one of your top treats? If so, you are not alone. The average American eats about 12 pounds each year. This adds up to more than 3 billion pounds!

People buy about 48 million pounds of chocolate candy during Valentine's week. They buy even more chocolate for Halloween, Easter and Christmas.

Let's learn more about this sweet treat.

Where do we get chocolate?

People make chocolate from the seeds of the cacao (kah-KOW) tree. It grows in the wild in the rainforests of Central and South America. It is also grown on farms in other tropical areas.



Each cacao pod is about the size of a pineapple. Each pod holds roughly 30 to 50 seeds, enough to make about seven milk chocolate bars.

Cacao trees grow about 30 feet tall. In the wild, taller trees growing around them protect them from tropical heat, wind and dryness.

An ancient drink

About 3,000 years ago, the Maya people in Mexico and Central America created a spicy chocolate drink. This was not the sweet chocolate we drink today.

Cacao seeds are bitter-tasting. The Maya ground the seeds into a paste and mixed it with water. They gave their chocolate an even

sharper taste by mixing it with spices such as red peppers.

The Maya drank their chocolate in religious and political ceremonies. It was a valuable trade item, and they introduced their chocolate drink to other people, including the Aztecs.

Aztecs and chocolate

Cacao trees did not grow in the cooler areas of what is now Mexico, where the Aztecs lived. They had to trade across long distances to get the seeds.



The Aztecs believed that drinking chocolate could give them the wisdom and knowledge of their god Quetzalcoatl (kwet-suhl-kuh WAH-tl).

Cacao seeds were so valuable that Aztecs used them as money in the 1400s to 1500s. They offered cacao seeds to their gods.

Their chocolate drink was drunk mainly by royalty, priests, and warriors and merchants receiving special honors.

Europeans discover chocolate

In the early 1500s, Spanish explorers learned of the valuable chocolate drink from the Aztecs. They took cacao seeds back to Spain.

The Spanish mixed the drink with sugar. Chocolate and sugar were both expensive, so only the wealthy could drink hot chocolate. In the next 100 years, visiting Europeans tasted it in Spain and wanted it too.

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of chocolate are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

AMERICA, BITTER, BOXED, CACAO, CANDY, CENTRAL, CHOCOLATE, DRINK, MAYA, MEXICO, PASTE, POUND, RAINFOREST, SEEDS, SOLID, SOUTH, SPICY, SWEET, TRADE, TREE, VALENTINE, VALUABLE.

C H O C O L A T E R T R A D E
D G S E E D S S C E N T R A L
O K Z V A L E N T I N E M E V
A N E L B A U L A V O P X Q S
C I B O X E D Z O M E X I C O
A R F R A I N F O R E S T S U
C D N U O P W T E E W S D P T
W E E R T A M E R I C A X I H
R E T T I B S O L I D K M C B
A Y A M P A S T E C A N D Y U



Cook's Corner

Double Chocolate Brownies

You'll need:

- 1 cup butter
- 1 (8-ounce) package bittersweet baking chocolate squares
- 1 (12-ounce) package semisweet chocolate chips, divided
- 2 cups sugar

What to do:

1. Microwave butter, bittersweet chocolate squares and half of package of chocolate chips for 2 to 3 minutes on high. Stir every 30 seconds until melted.
2. Add sugar, eggs and vanilla; mix well. Blend flour and salt into mixture.
3. In a separate bowl, mix walnuts, pecans and remaining chocolate chips. Add to batter.
4. Grease a 13-by-9-inch pan; spread batter evenly. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Allow to cool and cut into squares.

- 4 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts (optional)
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)



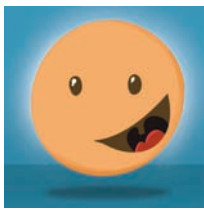
* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

1. not as good (5) _____
2. Australian star Irwin (5) _____
3. not paying attention (8) _____
4. getting closer (6) _____
5. mechanical device (7) _____
6. movie with Poppy and Branch (6) _____
7. smash into little pieces (5) _____

DI	ND	LLS	REL
NE	WOR	ESS	MA
CA	COM	TRO	CHI
ING	BIN	GRI	SE



Answers: worse, Bind!, careless, coming, machine, trolls, grind.

Solid chocolate

In the late 1600s and the 1700s, Italian chefs began using chocolate as a flavoring in other foods. They liked it so much that they put chocolate in everything. They even coated liver in chocolate and fried it!

Then, in 1776, a Frenchman invented a machine to grind cacao seeds into a paste. Other inventions soon followed. Producing chocolate became much easier and cheaper.

Candy arrives

Finally, after thousands of years, people invented solid chocolate candy. In 1847, Fry and Sons Co. in England sold the first solid chocolate candy. In 1868, Richard Cadbury introduced the first Valentine's boxed chocolates in England.



Chocolate Fact-a-roonies

- It takes about 400 cacao seeds to make 1 pound of chocolate.
- A cacao tree doesn't produce beans for the first four to five years of its life. The trees can live to be 200 years old!
- Cacao and cocoa are the same thing; cacao is the Spanish spelling.
- Hershey's makes 70 million Kisses every day!



Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPchocolate

At the library:

- "From Cocoa Beans to Chocolate" by Bridget Heos

Mini Jokes



- Valerie:** What was the French cat's favorite Valentine's Day dessert?
Vince: Chocolate mousse!

Eco Note



Food waste from China's expanding cities has become such a problem that firms are being encouraged to set up urban waste farms that use cockroaches to eat the scraps. One facility feeds food waste the equivalent in weight to seven adult elephants each day to a billion captive roaches. The bugs have the potential to provide nutrition for livestock once they die, and some say their dead bodies could also be used to cure stomach ailments and create beauty products.

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For later:

Look in your newspaper for ads featuring chocolate Valentine's candy.

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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