

The history and process of making chocolate

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Chocolate has become more tasty and popular worldwide from 1502 to today. The transformation from turning a cocoa bean to chocolate has captivated chocolate lovers throughout the world. The production of chocolate in all its forms has a fascinating history and process. The cacao tree produces cocoa beans, which is the most important ingredient of chocolate (De Las Casas 23; Polin 10).

Cacao trees are typically planted next to banana or coconut trees; these provide the shade that the cacao tree requires (10). It usually takes four years for the cacao tree to mature enough to begin producing cocoa pods (10). Gnats are essential in a cacao tree's growth, because gnats are the only things small enough to enter the blossom to go through pollination (10). The natives of South America were the first ones to start eating the cocoa beans in the cocoa pods. (23, 10).

There is a legend which the natives of South America think explains the discovery of chocolate. It is called Blue Frog (De las Casas 1-29). The sun god had a special tree that produced cacao pods, which produced the food of the gods, the cacao bean (1). The wind god told the sun god that he should share his cacao tree with the people, but the sun god didn't want to share (4-5). The wind god turned himself into a blue frog, and went to tell the people that the sun god was hoarding a treasure (10). He went to the children, and told them that the sun god had a tasty treasure he was hiding (13).

The children ran back to their village, then they brought their mothers, and the blue frog told the mothers (14-17). The mothers ran back to the village, and brought their mothers, and the blue frog told the mothers' mothers (18-

21). They went to look for the cacao tree, and soon discovered the cacao beans (23). The people went back to the village, and grew more trees (26). They called the tasty thing that came from the beans cacahuatl, which we call chocolate (26). The natives loved to eat chocolate so much that eventually cocoa pods actually became a currency (Cadbury 27; Polin 17).

The Aztecs would pay taxes to the emperor in the form of cocoa pods (27). In the Aztec royal palace, there were about 1, 000 million cocoa beans (27). The average cocoa pod can hold around thirty to forty cocoa beans, and the pod is very sturdy (Case ‘ The Microbiology of Chocolate’; Polin 8). The production of chocolate has an interesting history and process. The Mayans and Aztecs dried, crushed, and mixed their beans to create a special drink they called chocolate, or cacahuatl (De Las Casas 30; Polin 12-13).

In 1502, Christopher Columbus and his crew captured two Mayan canoes (Cadbury 26-27). They didn’t really think the cocoa beans were of any worth and regarded them as large almonds (27). Later the value of these “ large almonds” was discovered by Spanish conquistadors (27). After cocoa pods were brought to Europe, milk and sugar were added to chocolatl (Case ‘ The Microbiology of Chocolate’; Cadbury 26-27; Polin 17). The sweetened drink was renamed hot chocolate (Case; 26-27; 17).

Even with so many advancements in chocolate manufacturing, cocoa farming is still done by hand (Polin 36). The cocoa farmers have to carefully chop off the cocoa pods with knives, and they have to make sure that they don’t cut the bark of the tree whatsoever (36). Then, the farmers get wooden mallets and crack the pods open. Next, they remove the cocoa beans and

white pulp (36). During fermentation, the cocoa beans start to develop the chocolate taste; this also brings out the color of chocolate (Case 'The Microbiology of Chocolate'; Polin 37). Several different gases and hormones are involved in fermentation.

These include: Sucrose, Citric acid, Pectin, pH, Ethyl alcohol, and Acetic acid (Case 'The Microbiology of Chocolate.')

The cocoa bean to chocolate process is fairly complicated, and has quite a few steps involved in making both cocoa powder for hot chocolate, and a chocolate bar (Case 'The Microbiology of Chocolate').

First is harvesting, cutting or cracking the cocoa pod open to get at the beans (Case). Second is fermentation; micro-organisms and heat kill the cocoa bean over the course of a few days, and they help to bring out the flavor (Case). Third is to dry and preserve the beans, and ship them to chocolate making factories (Case). Fourth is cleaning, removing all the dirt, sand, debris, anything still on the cocoa bean from fermentation or shipping (Case).

Fifth is winnowing, removing the cocoa bean shell from the cotyledon, which is the nib (Case). The nib contains most of the flavor (Case). Sixth is roasting, heating up the nib to develop more flavor (Case). Seventh is grinding and milling, releasing the cocoa butter fat, and generating coarse particles of cocoa from the nib (Case). Eighth is mixing, combining cocoa, cocoa butter, milk, sugar, and other flavoring (Case). Ninth is conch, slowly mixing the ingredients under heat, while continuously grinding the mixture to make a smooth texture (Case).

Finally comes tempering, crystallizing the cocoa butter to form a solid structure that is easy to snap in two, and which melts in the mouth (Case). There are other chocolate making processes that are fairly simple (Polin 38-41). The first step is the beans that have been shipped from South America to the factory are cleaned and roasted (38-41). Second, the cocoa bean shells are separated from the cocoa beans revealing the nibs (38-41). Third, the cocoa nibs are ground up until in a thick paste substance (38-41).

Fourth, the cocoa nib paste is compressed. This process separates the cocoa butter from the cocoa mass (38-41). Fifth, the cocoa mass is ground again to make cocoa powder, which is separated into three things (38-41). Some is set apart to be made into hot chocolate mix, some is set apart to make chocolate products such as M, and the last bit is sold for people to use for making cakes and other pastries from scratch (38-41). If it is for a drink, sugar is added, and the cocoa mass mixes with sugar and melted cocoa (38-41). For chocolate products, the mix is ground once more and rolled into a smooth substance.

This smooth mix is poured into molds for chocolate bars and candy (38-41). Credit should be given to the natives of South America for the discovery of chocolate. However, many people were involved in helping chocolate progress over the period of five hundred years. In a few years, the process of making chocolate could be completely different. Most people will never know the five hundred-year history of chocolate, or the process of how chocolate is harvested and manufactured.

The people who do know should thank God for the cacao tree, because without it there's no chocolate. Works Cited Cadbury, Deborah. Chocolate Wars. New York: PublicAffairsTM, 2010. Book De Las Casas, Dianne.

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