

# The perfect hot chocolate

There are people who do not like hot chocolate, even on chilly winter mornings! To those poor creatures still dwelling in the gloomy ignorance of one of life's greatest joys, please accept my heartfelt condolences.

When we speak of hot chocolate, we are acknowledging real chocolate - brown and sophisticated immersed into whole milk and sugar; not the shameful 'quick-fix' powders propagated by the media!

## NOW LET'S DELVE A LITTLE DEEPER

Hot chocolate is most effective on dark, dreary afternoons when nothing on the horizon looks good. There are also days when life seems like a long series of stabs in the back, and hot chocolate can instantaneously lift the spirit.

During special occasions, with friends sitting all around, or on a day when you feel the need for some 'me-time', a hot chocolate can complete the picture and make the whole scene perfect.

The selection of this major ingredient is extremely important. High-end cook books and recipe magazines by Michelin Star restaurants and cafes suggest 70 percent cocoa solids or milk chocolates, depending on how intense one wants their flavour to be.

## THE GREAT DEBATE: MILK VERSUS CREAM

Whole milk is the standard recommendation for hot chocolates. To make it even more fascinating, 200ml single-cream can be added to the chocolate, just enough to make the drink tempt your taste buds.

Double cream can be another option, but it will make the drink taste more like a dessert. For those who are health conscious, semi-skimmed milk can be used but this recipe is definitely not recommended for food lovers, as the 'butteriness' of a whole milk will be entirely missed. Let one thing be very clear - hot chocolate was never meant to be considered a health drink!

## SPICES...YES SPICES!

So, you want to 'spike' your drink? Just add some condiments. Cinnamons go well too and the extra flavouring will not seem to overpower the natural taste. As a matter of fact, it blends wonderfully well with the brew, adding just the

right amount of taste; other options can be scraping a vanilla pod just to get enough flavour or infusing the milk with a little bit of nutmeg.

And yet, there are some who prefer their drink to be as natural as possible, and certainly without any condiments! Aztecs, who were probably the first to appreciate hot chocolate, even added chillies to their cocoa drink! This too might not fit the idea of a suitable drink to many, but it is definitely a good suggestion. A slightly close to home inspiration could

be simply adding malted drink to the hot chocolate mix.

## GLORIA JEAN'S COFFEE

Dhaka now has a great variety of cafes, some offering unique flavours - a signature of the establishment. Gloria Jean's Coffee offers both the creamy and the regular variant of hot chocolate. The creamier alternative is more popular as it has the right taste that does not seem overpowering to our palate - a buttery, creamy feeling that melts perfectly in the mouth.

However, if you are looking for a matured variant with more coffee in it, then it is probably not the best option.

## NORTH END COFFEE ROASTERS

This has recently proved to be the most favoured hangout joint, irrespective of whether you are craving hot chocolate, coffee or tea. Their cosy corners encourage spending quality time with a copy of your favourite book, or simply some time in solitude.

North End places a decorative froth on all of their hot chocolate, helping to uplift moods and bringing on that infinitesimal smile hovering behind mood swings.

The taste is moderate - you may even have probably tasted better hot chocolate in your lifetime, but the ambience makes it one of Dhaka's most favourite cafes.

## BITTERSWEET

This is another place where you get the perfect hot chocolate, maybe not with the additional flavourings or even a classy ambience. However, the quality of the drink makes it a good spot to jumpstart the day, or hangout at the end of some tough times at work.

A mug of hot chocolate on a chilly winter morning may just be the perfect start to any winter activity. Whether you are recovering from

cold, or wrapping gifts for Christmas - that look like they have been run over by Santa's sleigh; a hot cocoa will definitely take away all the pain and embarrassment and leave behind only the warm memories of the sweet past.

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury

Photo: Collected

Keep your eyes on "Star Live", the official YouTube channel of The Daily Star, to view the companion video.



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