

A chocolate dream

Chocolate is a mouth-watering temptation loved by almost everyone. But where exactly does it come from? Chocolate is produced from beans of the cocoa tree, which originated in South America. These trees are also widely grown in tropical humid climates such as Africa, the West Indies, tropical parts of America and the Far East. Chocolate has gained a reputation for many things – mainly as one of the most addictive foods available, creating numerous 'chocololics' who crave this irresistibly sweet, calorie-laden indulgence. It is also reputed to be possessed of aphrodisiac qualities and is definitely a quick energy supplier, probably because of its caffeine content.

However, for an unfortunate small group of people, chocolate is the cause of migraines – a tempting delight that is sometimes considered worth the cost of even a bad headache! It is mainly used for sweet rather than savoury dishes, but there are delicious Mexican dishes that combine turkey, chilli and chocolate, and many meat, game, or poultry casseroles can be enhanced by adding a couple of squares of dark or bitter chocolate.

Chocolate is useful nutritionally as a concentrated form of energy and is valuable as a compact food for expedition and for all kinds of travelling.

The nutritional value of chocolate per 30g/1 oz portion is approximately 150 calories and 7.5 – 8.5 grams of fat in plain, milk and white chocolate. Continental chocolates are a little higher.

DRINK FROM THE CACAO TREE

Cocoa Powder

This is the powder left after the cocoa butter has been pressed from the roasted and ground beans. It is unsweetened for culinary use and to make the traditional 'cup of cocoa'. It is easy to use and has a strong, slightly bitter chocolate flavour, but lacks the richness of block chocolate.

Powdered or drinking chocolate

Powdered milk, sugar and flavouring blended into the basic cocoa powder to produce an almost instant drink. It was introduced in Britain in the mid-1700s, almost a century before bite size chocolate were first available. It is also widely used in baking, but adds extra sweetness as it is a sweetened product.

BLOCK CHOCOLATES

The quality of these chocolates varies according to the percentage of cocoa butter it contains – most types have approximately 30 percent. The higher the percentage, the richer and more intense the flavour, and the



easier the chocolates melt. Flavour enhancers are also added. Most varieties of chocolate now have a luxury version which is richer, smoother and better flavoured. It is consequently higher priced but is a superior product for cooking. Most chocolate bars specify the cocoa solids content.

DARK CHOCOLATE

This variety contains 30–60 percent cocoa solids with a pleasant, slightly sweet taste and is dark in colour. It is the most popular chocolate used for cooking. The higher the cocoa solids, the richer and stronger the flavour, which is important as other ingredients tend to dilute the chocolate flavour in

a recipe. Many people like to eat plain chocolate in bar form – it is one of life's great indulgences!

MILK CHOCOLATE

This is more often eaten in bar form rather than used in cooking as it tastes creamy and sweet, due to the addition of sugar and condensed or powdered milk during production. It is paler and a richer brown colour than plain chocolate. It is good for decoration by drizzling or piping onto some other chocolate covering or decoration to give a contrast in colour. As it melts quickly, care needs to be taken that it is the correct consistency for use in cooking.

WHITE CHOCOLATE

This is creamy in both colour and texture and contains a lower percentage of cocoa butter than plain chocolate and no cocoa solids. The fat content is higher and it does not set as firmly as other chocolates. It needs care when melting, particularly in a microwave, for it tends to 'seize up' quickly unless handled carefully. Luxury white chocolate has a superior, less sweet and sickly flavour. It is very useful for decorations and for combining with dark chocolate to create attractive contrasts.

BITTER OR UNSWEETENED CHOCOLATE

This is a high percentage of cocoa butter – 75 percent on average – and no added sugar, as the name suggests. It is dark, with a strong, bitter, but rich flavour, excellent for use in confectionery, desserts and baking. It is available from larger supermarkets and specialist suppliers.

Chocolate — flavoured cake covering

Made from sugar, cocoa, vegetable oil and flavourings, this has a rather synthetic flavour. You can add a few squares to normal chocolate when melting, for its high fat content makes it easier to shape decorations, especially curls and caraque, but do not overdo it or the flavour will be impaired. It is available in dark, milk and white varieties.

Chocolate dots, buttons and strands

All of these are available in dark, milk and white varieties. They are used in baking and for decorations, especially in recipes for children.

STORING CHOCOLATE

Always buy superior quality the chocolates, for better flavour, result and ease of use. Supermarkets have a tremendous turnover of chocolate so what you buy is always fresh, but do check the shelf life it has been given and keep to its 'use by' date for best results and flavour.

Store in a cool dry place away from sunlight, well wrapped and away from strong odours that can be absorbed. Old chocolate will become dull with a whitish bloom, which is harmless but spoils the appearance. Most chocolates store well for up to a year.

Chocolate decorations such as leaves, curls, caraque and so on should be carefully packed in rigid airtight containers, interleaved between greaseproof papers on non-stick baking parchment. Storage life in a cool place is approximately four weeks for dark chocolate decorations and two weeks for white.

By Elora Hossain

Photo: Collected

মাদার নতুন নাম

কালার গার্ড

কাপড়ের রঙকে রাখে নতুনের মতো ঝকঝকে

মাল্টি বুস্টার

কাপড়ের যে কোন দাগ-ময়লাকে নিমিষেই দূর করে

সবচেয়ে ফাস্ট, সবচেয়ে কার্যকরী ..