**CHOCOLATE**

**Chocolate** has one of the most popular and also recognizable flavours in the world. It is an important ingredient in many kinds of [sweets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sweet): chocolate bars, [ice creams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ice_cream), [cookies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cookie), [cakes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cake), [pies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pie) and other desserts. It originates from the bean of the tropical cacao tree.

Chocolate was created 2600 years ago by [Maya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_civilization)s and [Aztecs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec) as a beverage. They mixed and grounded the cocoa beans with water to produce sweet or bitter beverages. The word "chocolate" originates from Aztec word “xocolatl”, which is a combination of the words “xocolli”, meaning “bitter” and “atl”, which is “water”.

Chocolate is made from the [fermented](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fermentation_%28food%29), roasted, and ground beans taken from the shell of the tropical cacao tree, which was native to [Central America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_America) and [Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexico), but is now cultivated in the [tropics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tropics).

The beans of cacao tree are intensely [bitter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bitter_%28taste%29), but chocolate is sweetened with lots of sugar. The combination of lots of different ingredients is solid and fat and is made into chocolate bars or into other shapes (people, animals …). It can also be made into beverages (cocoa, hot chocolate …).

The **production** of chocolate is a very lengthy process which includes: harvesting, blending, conching, tempering and storing.

The **pleasure** of eating chocolate is due to its delicious taste, to the fact that it melts in the mouth and that chocolate intake releases [serotonin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serotonin) in the brain (serotonin is a hormone which is also known as a “hormone of happiness”), which is thought to produce feelings of pleasure.

It is a popular belief that chocolate is very harmful to our **health**, but recent studies have shown that cocoa or dark chocolate has beneficial effects on human health. For example, it reduces [blood pressure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_pressure) after consuming 100g of dark chocolate daily. Consuming milk chocolate or white chocolate negate the health benefit. Chocolate is also calorie-rich food, so daily intake of chocolate also requires reducing caloric intake of other foods.

Chocolate contains some substances which are addictive (sugar, caffeine …).

Most of people think that consuming of chocolate causes [**blotches**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acne_vulgaris). But pure chocolate contains anti-oxidants which aid skin. One study showed that people who drank three or more glasses of milk a day were 22% more likely to develop blotches than people who consumed less milk. It is not the chocolate itself that causes acnes, but the milk with which the chocolate is mixed. So, unfortunately,milk and white chocolate may contribute to acnes.

Some of the integrands of chocolate are [toxic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toxic) to **animals** such as [horses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse), dogs, [parrots](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parrot), and cats ([kittens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitten) especially) because they are unable to [metabolize](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metabolize) them. If they are fed chocolate, these animals may experience [epileptic seizures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epileptic_seizure), [heart attacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myocardial_infarction), [internal bleeding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_bleeding), and eventually death.

And in the end, here are some interesting facts about chocolate:

* Aztecs believed, that all the wisdom comes out of chocolate.
* Consumers spend more than $7 billion a year on chocolate.
* Swiss consume most chocolate; 10 kg per person per year.