

## Chocolate

### ANCIENT CHOCOLATE

Eating and drinking chocolate is a much older tradition than you might think. As early as 450 BC, the Aztecs were making drinks from chocolate. They believed that the cacao seeds that were used to make the treat were a gift from their god, Quetzalcoatl. For hundreds of years, the seeds were so important that the Aztecs used them as money.

Early chocolate was nothing like the chocolate seen in shops today. The first drinks were very bitter and were mixed with spices or ground corn to add flavour. People in the south of Mexico still make these drinks today: they are known as Chilate.



### INTO EUROPE

It wasn't until the 16th century that people in Europe became aware of the cacao tree. Christopher Columbus was one of the first westerners to discover the beans. Even when he took them back to Spain, it took a long time for them to become popular. This was perhaps because they weren't sure what to do with them. They also found the bitter taste too much to take.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés travelled to the Aztecs in Mexico. He saw them presenting their king with a cup of chocolate, which may be the first time a European saw what could be made from the cacao bean.

### MODERN DELIGHTS

The Industrial Revolution meant that lots of processes in making chocolate became quicker and easier. Scientists found ways to make it less bitter and to make it cheaper and to keep the quality high. Originally, the hard chocolate that we know today was called "Dutch cocoa".

Joseph Fry made an important discovery in 1847 when he worked out how to make chocolate moldable. In 1875, Daniel Peter invented milk chocolate by adding powdered milk to the chocolate mix.

Most of the big chocolate companies that exist today began making chocolate during the 18th and 19th centuries. It was thanks to all of these changes that chocolate stopped being used mainly as a drink and started to be eaten as a food.

### ADVERTISING

For a while, chocolate was considered healthy. The Victorians thought that sugar and sweet things were good for the body and wholesome. Only very wealthy people could afford sweets and chocolate before the Industrial Revolution. This meant that Victorians were desperate to get their hands on it. Early adverts were aimed mainly at women, and they encouraged them to buy chocolate as part of their family's diet.

Nowadays, the public is aware of the harmful effects of too much sugar. There are rules in place to stop companies advertising chocolate to children. This doesn't stop people in Britain eating over 660,000 tonnes of chocolate each year. That's nearly 3 big bars a week per person.