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Creating a Healthier Happier You!

Chocolate 101

Here's a thorough description of the different types of chocolate and some cooking techniques to help you in the kitchen.

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Chocolate

Chocolate is made from cocoa beans harvested in pods from cocoa trees. Here are various different strains of cocoa, which give different flavour profiles.

The three most common are:

- Trinitario
- Forastero
- Criollo

Origins

33%	Ivory Coast	1.8%	Peru
17.5 %	Ghana	1.66%	Mexico
7.45%	Indonesia	1.4 %	Dominican Republic
5.6%	Ecuador	1.1%	Colombia
5.3%	Brazil		



The image features three ceramic bowls arranged on a white surface. The top-left bowl contains pieces of milk chocolate, which are light brown and have a slightly glossy texture. The top-right bowl contains pieces of white chocolate, which are off-white and appear to have small dark specks, possibly cocoa nibs. The bottom bowl contains pieces of dark chocolate, which are a deep, dark brown color. The bowls have a rustic, handcrafted appearance with visible rim textures.

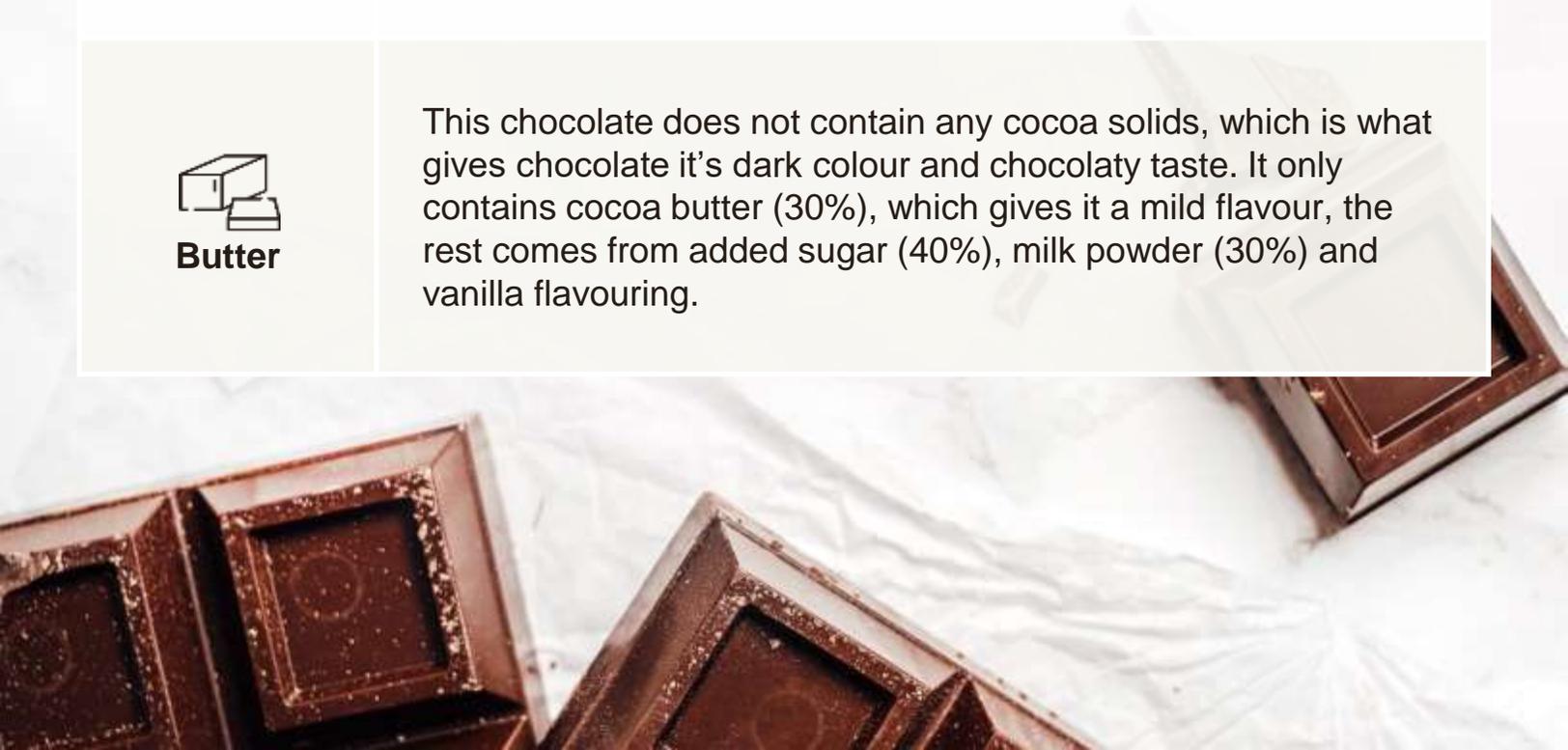
Chemistry of Cocoa

Cocoa contains over 600 different flavour-carrying substances and the cocoa butter melts at mouth temperature. It also contains sugar and flavoursome cocoa, which all put together stimulates the brain's pleasure centres. On top of that, cocoa also contains stimulants, such as caffeine and theobromine, which causes 'chocolate high'.

Know Your Chocolate

There are three main types of chocolate - dark, milk and white. It all comes down on how the chocolate is made; the levels of cocoa solids, cocoa fat (butter), sugar and milk powder it contains.

Types	Description
 Milk	Made only from 100% cocoa beans, with no added sugar, and only a little bit of cocoa butter. This chocolate is very intense and bitter. In cooking it is mainly used in stews and roasted meats.
 Half-and-half	This type of chocolate has 35-99% cocoa mass, some added sugar (1-65%) and a little milk powder (1-12%). The high percentage of cocoa, the more intense the flavour is. In cooking, it is best used in brownies, cakes and mousses.
 Heavy Cream	The milk chocolate is the most popular chocolate for eating. It can come with added fruit, nuts or spices. The cocoa mass here can be between 20-35%, sugar 25-55% and milk powder 25-35%. Low quality chocolate usually contains vegetable oil instead of cocoa butter. Best used in baking, like cookies or muffins.
 Butter	This chocolate does not contain any cocoa solids, which is what gives chocolate its dark colour and chocolaty taste. It only contains cocoa butter (30%), which gives it a mild flavour, the rest comes from added sugar (40%), milk powder (30%) and vanilla flavouring.



How to Melt Chocolate



THE MICROWAVE METHOD

Step 1 Chop chocolate into small pieces and place in microwave-safe bowl.

Step 2 Microwave at 70% power for 1 minute. Remove from microwave and stir.

Step 3 Continue to microwave in 30-second increments, stirring frequently, until the chocolate has fully melted.



THE STOVETOP METHOD

Step 1 Add chopped chocolate to the top of a double boiler over gently simmering water.

TIP If you don't have a double boiler then a metal bowl over a saucepan works too. Just make sure the bottom of the bowl doesn't touch the water in the pan.



SLOW COOKER METHOD

Step 1 Fill a slow cooker one-third of the way with hot water. Set the heat to high, leaving the lid off.

Step 2 Place mason jars filled with chopped chocolate into the water.

Step 3 Leave for about 30 minutes, without the lid, until chocolate is melted.

Source: The Science of Cooking: Every Question Answered to Perfect Your Cooking by Stuart Dr. Farrimond

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