

Scientists prove chocolate â€™better than being in loveâ€™™

Description



Scientists prove chocolate â€™better than being in loveâ€™™

The Ancient Incas knew it, as does Bridget Jones and that kindly person who always gives you their last Rolo. Ever since humankind grew its first sweet tooth, thereâ€™™s been nothing like chocolate to raise the spirits.

For years, academics have tried to discover exactly what makes it so irresistible â€“ speculating that key ingredients like cocoa beans, caffeine or any of its other 300 compounds can boost energy and libido.

But now scientists at Cambridge University have carried out brain scans that suggest a much more simple explanation. Chocolate is linked to feelings of wellbeing because it simply tastes so good.

They claim munching a bar induces sensations that could be even more pleasurable than listening to your favourite music, winning the lottery, or falling in love.

Cambridge neuroscientist Adrian Owen said the balance of the evidence suggested that it was more to do with the taste than any psychoactive chemicals.

The average bar of chocolate, he claimed, simply did not contain enough mood-altering substances to make a difference â€“ some of them, for example, were found in higher doses in a lump of Cheddar

cheese or sausage.

Dr Owen, who works at the university's Wolfson Brain Imaging Centre, said: "The scientific data suggests that the mood-enhancing effects of chocolate are not pharmacological – the constituents of chocolate do not appear to affect the brain via a direct biological action.

"An alternative explanation is that the effects of eating chocolate are psychological – the unique combination of aroma, texture and taste makes eating chocolate a pleasurable experience that stimulates the emotional 'feel-good' centres of the brain. In short, the chocolate tastes good, so we feel good."



Scientists prove chocolate "better than being in love"

The evidence for this are scans that have tracked changes in the activity of the orbitofrontal-cortex " on the brain's surface " which analyses the "reward value" of incoming information to the brain.

As scans on a group of volunteers showed, the orbitofrontal cortex glows even more when they were munching a bar of chocolate than when they were listening to pleasant music.

Dr Owen, 36, said: "Both smelling and eating chocolate activate areas of the brain that are known to be involved in creating feelings of pleasure. It seems chocolate has a unique blend of sensory qualities which make us feel good, activating pleasure centres in the brain.

[Colin Freeman](#)

Category

1. Fun
2. Information

Tags

1. Caffeine
2. Chocolate
3. Cocoa
4. Love
5. Science

Date Created

September 29, 2014

Author

sephra

default watermark