

The docs offer advice: The Power of Chocolate

Description



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[Roald Dahl](#), who wrote “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,” was buried with a good supply of chocolate and red wine, along with snooker cues, pencils and a power saw. Apparently, [Roald Dahl](#) knew chocolate and red wine are two healthful choices. (We’re not sure what to make of the other supplies!)

Red wine in moderation has long been touted as heart-friendly, and now a vast new study in the journal [Heart](#) reveals that regular enjoyment of chocolate is associated with a lower waist-to-hip ratio and a 23 percent lower risk of stroke. Plus, it helps cool inflammatory CRP proteins and reduces the risk for diabetes. And compared with folks who ate none, higher intake was linked to a 25 percent lower risk of cardiovascular-associated death.

That’s because the product’s polyphenols help reduce your blood pressure, decreasing your risk for heart attack and stroke. It also looks like those polyphenols decrease levels of the stress hormone cortisol, and as a summer bonus, they may help protect skin from the sun’s UV rays.

The Power of Chocolate

How can you get it into your diet without falling for candy bars laced with sugar, palm oil, corn syrup, artificial flavors and colors? We recommend having one ounce a day of 70 percent cacao dark after dinner ([Dr. Michael Roizen](#) grabs three 22-calorie bites a day) or try unsweetened cocoa powder added to black beans seasoned with cinnamon and hot sauce. You also can grate it and sprinkle it over your morning oatmeal with unsweetened almond milk.

[Mehmet Oz & Michael Roizen](#)

Chocolate [Listen](#) [i/ĒˆtĒfĒkáuŠIÉ™t/](#) is a typically sweet, usually brown, food preparation of [Theobroma cacao](#) seeds, roasted and ground, often flavored, as with vanilla. It is made in the form of a liquid, paste, or in a block, or used as a flavoring ingredient in other sweet foods. Cacao has been cultivated by many cultures for at least three millennia in [Mesoamerica](#). The earliest evidence of use traces to the [Mokaya](#) ([Mexico](#) and [Guatemala](#)), with evidence of beverages dating back to 1900 BC.^[1] In fact, the majority of [Mesoamerican](#) people made beverages, including the [Maya](#) and [Aztecs](#),^[2] who made it into a beverage known as [xocolātl](#) [\[ĒfoĒˆkolaĒˆtlĒ-\]](#), a [Nahuatl](#) word meaning "bitter water". The seeds of the cacao tree have an intense [bitter](#) taste and must be [fermented](#) to develop the flavor.

After fermentation, the beans are dried, cleaned, and roasted. The shell is removed to produce cacao nibs, which are then ground to [cocoa mass](#), pure chocolate in rough form. Because the cocoa mass is usually liquefied before being molded with or without other ingredients, it is called [chocolate liquor](#). The liquor also may be processed into two components: [cocoa solids](#) and [cocoa butter](#). Unsweetened [baking chocolate](#) (bitter chocolate) contains primarily cocoa solids and cocoa butter in varying proportions. Much of the product consumed today is in the form of [sweet chocolate](#), a combination of cocoa solids, cocoa butter or other fat, and sugar. [Milk chocolate](#) is sweet chocolate that additionally contains milk powder or condensed milk. [White chocolate](#) contains cocoa butter, sugar, and milk, but no cocoa solids.

Cocoa solids are one of the richest sources of [flavanol antioxidants](#).^[3] They also contain [alkaloids](#) such as [theobromine](#), [phenethylamine](#) and [caffeine](#).^[4] These have physiological effects on the body and are linked to [serotonin](#) levels in the brain. Some research has found that when eaten in moderation it can lower blood pressure but whether or not this results in improved outcomes is unclear.^{[5][6]} The presence of theobromine makes it toxic to some animals, including dogs and cats.^[7]

The product has become one of the most popular food types and flavours in the world, and a vast number of foodstuffs have been created. [Chocolate chip cookies](#) have become very common, and very popular, in most parts of Europe and North America. Gifts molded into different shapes have become traditional on certain holidays. It is also used in cold and hot beverages such as [chocolate milk](#) and [hot chocolate](#).

Although cocoa originated in the Americas, today Western Africa produces almost two-thirds of the world's cocoa, with [Côte d'Ivoire](#) growing almost half of it.

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