

CHOCOLATE UNWRAPPED

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Badger
LEARNING

1. THE ORIGINS OF CHOCOLATE

We might think of chocolate as a modern snack, but it has actually been around for thousands of years. It was enjoyed in the Americas long before it reached Europe and the rest of the world.

Words highlighted in this colour are in the glossary on page 30

People who lived in Mexico and Central America hundreds of years ago, such as the Maya and the Aztecs, made a cold, frothy drink by crushing the beans of the cacao (ka-kay-oh) tree and mixing them with water. They sometimes added chilli or vanilla for flavour.

They called it 'xocolatl' (choc-o-la-tull) which is probably where the word 'chocolate' comes from. But this drink had a bitter taste and was very different from the sweet chocolate we know today.



Cacao pod with beans inside

Chocolate was very important to both the Maya and the Aztecs. They drank it for energy but also used it as medicine for lots of different illnesses.

The Maya used it in religious ceremonies. Many carvings, drinking cups and **manuscripts** have been found that show their gods next to cacao trees. One vase even shows the head of a god growing out of a cacao tree.

The Aztecs believed chocolate was only meant for the gods. One of their gods, Quetzalcoatl (ket-zal-ko-a-tull), made the other gods angry by stealing the cacao tree and showing humans how to make the special drink.



Quetzalcoatl,
the 'chocolate god'



WOW! facts

Cacao beans were so **valuable** to the Aztecs that they used them as money. They could trade beans for food or clothing. We have all heard the saying, 'money doesn't grow on trees', but in this case it was true!

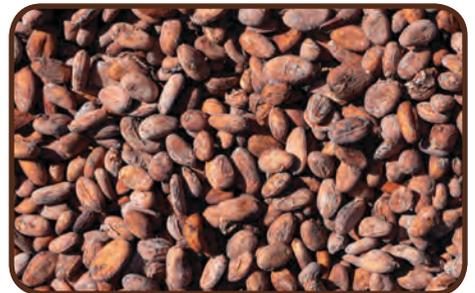
Maya chocolate recipe

1. Remove the pods from a cacao tree and take out the cacao beans.



2. Keep the cacao beans in their white pulp and leave them for a few days. They will ferment (start to break down), turning brown.

3. Dry the beans in the sun for a week. They will turn a darker brown.



4. Roast the beans in a clay pot, then peel away their shells.

