



The name Chocolate is from the Aztec word “xocoatl” which is a bitter drink brewed from cacao beans. Cacao beans come from the cacao tree, its botanical name, Theobroma cacao, literally means “food of the gods.”

From its earliest origins, Chocolate has been cherished for its unique flavour, magical/divine properties, source of nutrition, power of cleansing, aphrodisiac properties and of course not least as something very delicious to eat.

When we think of chocolate we think of it in sweet bars, packaged in shiny foil and branded by well recognised names; or as a cake, pudding or ice cream. To think that there is evidence as far back as 1400 B.C of the sweet pulp of the cacao fruit being fermented



into some type of alcoholic drink by the Olmec Civilization.

Our sweetened form of chocolate originated only after we had discovered the Americas. Its popularity first spread through Spain and was generally only preferred when sweetened with Honey or cane sugar. By the earlier part of the 17th century the drink of chocolate had become popular throughout the affluent of Europe and by the late 1700's; the invention of the steam engine enabled its mass production and brought with it a whole range of new opportunities.

In 1828 a Dutch chemist, Conrad J. Van Houten, discovered how to make powdered chocolate from roasted cacao beans. At the centre of the bean is the “nib” which contains on average 54% of the natural fat called cocoa butter, by processing this with his hydraulic press he was able to remove almost half of this fat content. The remaining “cake” was then pulverising into cocoa, which was then treated with alkaline salts to cut the bitter taste and to make it easier to mix with water. The product he created was known as “Dutch Cocoa”. It was the creation of this product that led to the first creation of solid chocolate. Today this process is known as “Dutching.”

Building on Van Houten's success it is argued that English chocolate maker Joseph Storrs Fry Produced the worlds first eating chocolate in 1847. In the late 19th century Daniel Peter a Swiss chocolate manufacturer incorporated powdered milk (invented by Swiss Chemist Henri Nestle in 1867) to create milk chocolate. In 1879 Rudolphe Lindt invented a process called “conching,” which greatly improved the quality of chocolate making it smoother and creamier.

Quaker John Cadbury opened his first grocery store in Bull Street Birmingham in 1824, where as part of his business he roasted his own cacao beans. Realizing it as a highly profitable product he decided to concentrate his business efforts in chocolate manufacturing. He began initially making cocoa and drinking chocolate with a pestle and mortar. By 1854, after many moves of premises he had settled on a larger site in a suburb of Birmingham which was later renamed “Bournville” and had received the Royal warrant to be the sole purveyor of cocoa the Queen Victoria.