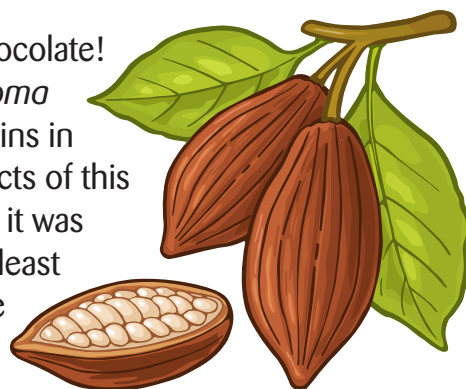


Hot Chocolate

Winter is a great time to enjoy some delicious homemade hot chocolate! Chocolate is prepared from the seeds of the cacao plant, *theobroma cacao*, a tropical tree native to the Amazon and Orinoco river basins in South America. The Aztec and Maya people cherished the products of this plant. Recent genetic studies of one variety of cacao indicate that it was domesticated (selectively bred for traits preferred by humans) at least 3,600 years ago in South America and then spread through trade throughout ancient Mesoamerica.



This cold-weather treat involves science because you're making an infusion. The process includes extracting flavors from plant materials in a solvent over time. For our hot chocolate, the water is the solvent, and simmering the spices adds earthy flavors to the final rich chocolate drink.

Ingredients

- 4 oz chocolate de taza, or semisweet chocolate, chopped
- 3 cups water
- 4 cloves
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 can unsweetened evaporated milk
- Sugar to taste
- 2 teaspoons vanilla essence or extract
- 1/2 teaspoon grated nutmeg
- 1 cup whipped cream (optional)



Preparation

1. To make the infusion, in a heavy saucepan add the water, cinnamon and cloves. Bring to liquid to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Discard the spices.
2. Add the chopped chocolate, stirring until melted.
3. Add the evaporated milk, sugar, nutmeg and vanilla.
4. Serve immediately with a dollop of whipped cream if desired, and a sprinkling of ground cinnamon or grated chocolate.
5. This recipe offers opportunities for experimentation. For a thicker hot chocolate, stir in 1 teaspoon of cornstarch diluted in 1 tablespoon of water before turning off the heat. For a lighter version, add more hot water or some regular milk.

Serves 4

Adapted from perudelights.com/hot-chocolate



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