



The Story of

CHOCOLATE

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Words in **bold** appear in the glossary.

What Is Chocolate?

What is your favorite sweet treat? Maybe you like cookies. Or maybe you love cake and ice cream. No matter what, chocolate is a popular choice. But where does it come from?





Cacao flowers grow on trees.

All chocolate comes from **cacao** beans. They grow on cacao trees in rain forests. Pink and white flowers grow on the trunks and branches.

One tree can grow 6,000 flowers in a year! Only three to 10 percent will become cacao **Pods**.



Cacao pods change color as they ripen.

Pods start out green. They ripen in five to six months. They turn yellow, red, or orange. A ripe pod is 8 to 14 inches (20 to 36 centimeters) long. It is shaped like a football.

Pods are very hard on the outside. But look inside! There are 20 to 60 seeds. These are called beans. They may not look like much. But they are the start of all the chocolate we eat. So who first discovered them?



The First Chocolate

Chocolate is not new. It was first discovered thousands of years ago in Mexico and Central America. The **Olmec** people were the first to crack open cacao pods.

The **Maya** later planted the beans. They used them to trade with the **Aztecs**. Aztec land was very dry. They could not plant their own beans.



Maya women make hot chocolate.



Cacao beans are ground by hand.

The Maya and Aztecs both crushed the beans. Then they added water. This was the first chocolate. It was liquid. But it was not like today's sweet chocolate drinks. It was **bitter**. People added spices to make it taste better.