

CACAO, FOOD OF THE GODS

Raw chocolate, a health food?

We have been introduced to the wonders of chocolate in its purest form, the cacao bean. Cacao turns out to be one of nature's most nutritious foods, due to its wide array of unique properties, many of which are destroyed or corrupted by cooking.

The cacao bean is what all chocolate is made from. Chocolate bars get a bad press because of all the stuff it's usually mixed it with - the high sugar content, hydrogenated fats, and dairy products. Chocolate in its purest form, that of the raw cacao bean, has health-giving properties. It is the number one dietary source of magnesium - one reason why many women crave it around the time of menstruation. It is also exceptionally high in sulphur, the 'beauty mineral'. Added to that, it is rich in antioxidants, it's a natural anti-depressant, and an aphrodisiac! In fact, it contains over 300 identifiable chemical compounds, making it one of the most complex foods known to man. So not only does it taste divine, it makes you feel like a goddess too!

Cacao is the seed of a fruit of an Amazonian tree that was brought to Central America during or before the time of the Olmecs. Cacao beans were so revered by the Mayans and Aztecs that they used them as money; for example, one fish was worth three cacao beans, or one avocado was worth one cacao bean! In 1753 Carl von Linnaeus, the 18th-century Swedish scientist, thought that cacao was so important that he named the genus and species of this tree himself. He named this tree, *Theobroma Cacao*, which literally means "cacao, the food of the gods".

Cacao is a revelation. It tastes so sinful and decadent, you can really indulge yourself. And instead of feeling low energy because you've pigged out, you just get a pleasant high. Plus it helps you lose weight! What more could anyone ask for?

Nutritional Profile

Substances in chocolate that have been discussed in the scientific literature as pharmacologically significant, include:

Magnesium one of the most commonly deficient minerals.

Sulphur anecdotal reports indicate that cacao detoxifies mercury because it is so high in sulphur.

Anandamide known as "the bliss chemical" because it is released while we are feeling great. Cacao contains enzyme inhibitors that decrease our bodies' ability to breakdown anandamide. This means that natural anandamide and/or cacao anandamide may stick around longer, helping us feel good longer, when we eat cacao.

Arginine nature's Viagra.

Epicatechins and polyphenols antioxidants - cacao is one of the richest sources of antioxidants of any foods.

Serotonin, tryptophan, and dopamine neurotransmitters which help alleviate depression and are associated with feelings of well being.

Phenylethylamine PEA is an adrenal-related chemical that is also created within the brain and released when we are in love. This is one of the reasons why love and chocolate have a deep correlation. PEA also plays a role in increasing focus and alertness.

MAO Inhibitors cacao seems to diminish appetite, probably due to its monoamine oxidase enzyme inhibitors (MAO inhibitors) - these are different from digestive enzyme inhibitors found in most nuts and seeds. These rare MAO inhibitors actually produce favorable results when consumed by allowing more serotonin and other neurotransmitters to circulate in the brain. According to Dr. Gabriel Cousens, MAO inhibitors facilitate youthening and rejuvenation.

Cacao contains subtle amounts of caffeine and theobromine. However, experiments have shown that these stimulants are far different when consumed raw rather than cooked. Consider the following: experimental provings of chocolate by homeopaths indicate its stimulating effect when cooked. One experiment conducted with a decoction of roasted ground cacao beans in boiling water

produced an excitement of the nervous system similar to that caused by black coffee, an excited state of circulation, and an accelerated pulse. Interestingly, when the same decoction was made with raw, unroasted beans neither effect was noticeable, leading the experimenters to conclude that the physiological changes were caused by aromatic substances released during roasting.