

COCOA MOJO!

ENJOY THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF CHOCOLATE

With so many deliciously different variations of chocolate products available in the marketplace today, it's easy to forget that chocolate actually originates from a fruit. Chocolate comes from the seeds of the fruit pod of the cacao (ka-KOW) tree. Chocolate's irresistible and tempting flavor gives it a "sinful" image; however, thanks to the nutrient-rich cocoa seeds or beans it is created from, cocoa can pack a powerful antioxidant punch!

CHOCOLATE AS A HEALTH FOOD...

There are certain components of cocoa and chocolate that may provide some health benefits. Recent and emerging findings suggest that chocolate may possibly:

- Raise HDL (good) cholesterol and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol,
- Promote healthy blood flow,
- Reduce blood pressure in people with high blood pressure,
- Help maintain healthy blood sugar levels.



Unsweetened chocolate or cocoa is healthier to eat (but not as tasty!), and most chocolate products contain added fat and refined sugar. Even though the type of fat in chocolate does not raise cholesterol levels, a person can add unwanted pounds if they overindulge. As a plant-based food and ingredient, chocolate can be part of a healthy diet when used in moderation.



CHOCOLATE FONDUE

Serves 6

Light Chocolate Sauce

- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons Splenda Granular
- ½ cup fat-free evaporated milk
- 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract

Preparation

Whisk together cocoa, sugar, and Splenda in a medium-sized bowl. Slowly pour in milk to make a paste. Mix together to remove lumps. Transfer to a medium saucepan and bring to a low boil over low heat, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla. Transfer chocolate sauce to fondue pot and place over heat source. Arrange all fruits and nuts on a plate; dip into chocolate sauce. *One serving equals ½ cup fruit, 2-4 nuts, 2 tablespoons sauce and has 183 calories, 6.8 g fat, 32 g carbs, 5.4 g fiber, 5 g protein.*

LOCO FOR COCOA

Natural cocoa powder that has not been extensively processed may be richer in certain antioxidants called flavanols. A good rule of thumb for choosing a healthier cocoa is to look for non-alkalized or lightly alkalized cocoas (also referred to as "dutch" cocoa). Natural cocoa is not alkalized. Because of this factor, natural and dutched cocoas are not interchangeable when baking. A great natural cocoa to try is Scharffen Berger Natural Cocoa Powder, unsweetened (<http://www.scharffenberger.com>).

Dipping Foods

- 1 pint fresh strawberries
- 1 red apple, cored and sliced
- 1 green apple, cored and sliced
- 1 banana, sliced
- ¼ cup jumbo cashews and ¼ cup Brazil nuts

Sources:
Cocoa and Chocolate: Sweet News! Nutrition Fact Sheet. *American Dietetic Association*, 2007.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cocoa>
Recipe courtesy of Joy Bauer, RD, LD for *Self Magazine* accessed at:
<http://www.self.com/foodiet/recipes/2004/10/chocolate-fondue>

