

*Recipes*

**MY FIRST CLEAR MEMORIES OF  
CHOCOLATE GO BACK TO WHEN  
I WAS ABOUT FIVE YEARS OLD.**



It was a little secret between me and my dad – mom probably didn't know about it. When dad took me to daycare, he'd give me a little mint chocolate bar. The sweet taste, the amazing feeling of chocolate melting on my tongue... ahh! Who could resist that?

To me chocolate has been comfort, security and love since then: when times got tough as a teenager, when I broke up with my first love, in times of happiness and in times of sorrow. There's such a scale of emotions that are attached to chocolate that you could say I'm a "chocoaholic".

After diving into the world of healthy nutrition some years ago, and commencing a career as a fitness and nutrition coach, my affair with chocolate came to an end. I learned that chocolate contained unhealthy white sugar and bad fats. It was addictive. And, I thought, it certainly wouldn't help me stay lean. Overall, chocolate just seemed just bad for me.

Oh my beloved chocolate! I was miserable for some time. I grieved for the loss. What would I do without it? It appeared as though my lifelong affair with chocolate had come to an end.

Then, through my training as a nutrition coach, I learned that dark,

organic chocolate has a high nutritional value. I hadn't liked dark chocolate before, but now, I think it tastes great. One piece of it with a good cup of tea or coffee is heaven to me now.

I have also learned that raw chocolate, or actually cacao (which chocolate is made of) is known a "superfood". Superfoods contain relatively vast amounts of minerals, vitamins and antioxidants – many more than "normal" foods. Cacao has the highest concentration of antioxidants then any other food in the world. It's a complete protein, meaning it has a full complement of amino acids, and is very high in iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, copper, and manganese. (For more on cacao and chocolate's health benefits, see elsewhere in this issue. –Ed.)

Raw cacao is also a mood enhancer. It increases serotonin and affects other neurotransmitters which make us feel happy. It also enhances the blood flow in the brain and enhances brain function, which can help in situations where a person may be cognitively impaired, like fatigue or sleep deprivation. So popping a couple of cacao nuts when feeling tired can be a much better choice than drinking a pot of coffee to keep the eyes open.

Food that brings us bliss, keeps us alert, and nourishes us? What could be better?

It was time to renew my love of chocolate, and deepen our relationship. I felt creative and excited. I was going to challenge myself to make chocolate.

As it turns out, chocolate making is very quick and easy! Anyone can do it. Kids absolutely love making their own chocolate (as do grownups). I know. I have tried. I highly recommend you try it too – having a group chocolate party is so much fun!

Here are the ingredients you need on hand to make your own raw chocolate. I highly recommend you to make sure you use the best available quality of raw cacao and other ingredients. Many cheap varieties don't have the same properties than the best cacao in the world (a variety known as Criollo). You can find this cacao and all the other ingredients you need from Sunfood.com.

Enjoy in moderation (1/2 - 1 oz per serving) with good friends or family. This superfood combination shouldn't be measured in calories, which tell nothing about the properties of this food. Its nutrient density can't be put into such numbers as protein, carbs and fats.

If you want to add some additional ingredients to make your chocolate super exciting, you can try any of the following:

**Freeze dried berry powders (blueberry, raspberry, cranberry, buckthorn berry...)**

**Purple corn powder (high antioxidants)**

**Cocoa nibs**

**Goji berries**

**Dried unsweetened berries like mulberry, Incan berries, organic raisins etc.**

**Dates, chopped**

**Crushed nuts, almonds, pine nuts**

**Hemp, sunflower,**

**pumpkin seeds**

**Chili or cayenne powder**

**Maca**

**Green tea extract**

**Spirulina**

**Carob**

**...or anything else you like!**

#### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

*1/2 cup (125 mL) cocoa butter, grated*

*1/2 cup (125 mL) virgin coconut oil*

*1/2 cup (125 mL) (raw) organic cocoa powder*

*2 tbs (30 mL) lucuma powder (will make the chocolate creamy, milk chocolate like, also adds sweetness)*

*1/4 (60 mL) - 1/2 cup (125 mL) agave nectar for sweetening or liquid stevia to taste (organic honey or raw cane sugar is okay too if you're not afraid of calories and carbs; or you don't have to use any sweetener at all)*

#### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1 Grate 1/2 cup of the cocoa butter. It will melt easier when it's grated. Measure also 1/2 cup of coconut oil.

2 Place cocoa butter and coconut oil in a water in a small, heat safe cup or bowl. Then place the cup or bowl in a shallow pan containing a small amount of nearly boiling water. Stir the oil and butter occasionally until it's smooth.

3 Measure 1/2 cup cocoa powder. If you'd like to add any other dry ingredients, measure them out now and stir them together with the cocoa powder. I often use 1/4 cup lucuma powder, some goji berries and 1 tbsp maca.

4 Pour the dry ingredients in the bowl with melted coconut oil and cacao butter. Stir continuously until smooth.

5 If you want to sweeten your chocolate, pour 4-6 tbsp agave nectar into the mix and stir. Lately I've used stevia liquid to sweeten my chocolate. My favourite is Vanilla Stevia by NuNaturals (you can get it from iHerb.com).

6 Make chocolate making fun! Go ahead and check if the chocolate is sweet enough. Who wouldn't like to lick the spoon! I often add stevia, taste, add some more, taste again... you get the point. You can also add the rest of the additions at this point - like goji berries, chili, nuts and so on. Use your imagination and make the best chocolate in the world!

7 Pour the melted chocolate on a pan or plate coated with aluminium foil. You can also use an ice cube tray. Kids love chocolate that's made into funny forms (with an ice cube tray) like bunnies and such. You can also throw some of the additions on top of the chocolate to make it look nice.

8 Place the chocolate for 30 minutes in the freezer or 60 minutes in the refrigerator until set. Enjoy!

