



Did You Know?

During the 16th century Europeans visiting the Americas considered hot chocolate to be an acquired taste. Sugar was not yet routinely available and the newcomers found the spicy, bitter drink to be unpleasant.

Maximizing the Health Benefits of Cocoa

In general, the less processed the cocoa is, the more nutrients it contains. Cocoa in its raw form has four times the antioxidants as processed cocoa. It is available at health foods stores and will taste bitter, but you can add sugar or honey to sweeten it. The general rules when looking for cocoa powder are:

- * The darker the chocolate, the more antioxidants it contains.
- * The higher cocoa content, the more antioxidants it contains.
- * The less sugar, the better it is for your overall health.

Chocolate in general contains saturated fat and sugar, so remember that moderation is the key. Look for hot cocoas that are lower in fat and sugar and use low-fat or nonfat milk to prepare it, thereby increasing the nutritional punch of this tasty beverage!

Here is a nutritious and simple recipe:

Favorite Hot Cocoa

Ingredients:

1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/3 cup hot water
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
4 cups milk
1/8 teaspoon salt
3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preparation:

Mix cocoa, sugar, water and salt in a saucepan. Over medium heat, stir constantly until mixture boils. Cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Stir in the milk and heat, but do not boil. Remove from heat and add vanilla; blend well. Serve immediately.

Enjoy the health benefits of more [cocoa containing recipes](#).

References:

1. Benzie IF, Choi SW. Antioxidants in food: content, measurement, significance, action, cautions, caveats and research needs. *Adv Food Nutr Res.* 2014;71:1-53.
2. Kozłowska A, Szostak-Wegierek D. Flavonoids--food sources and health benefits. *Rocz Panstw Zakł Hig.* 2014;65(2):79-85.