

Chocolate – The Super Super food!!

Chocoholics' heaven!!

Chocolicious!!

Ok here is where I earn a lot of brownie points from all our fellow "dieters"!! Let this be remembered for a long while to come!! If you are on a diet You CAN eat dark chocolate!! I hear a quick collective intake of relieved breaths!!!

However I would also like to emphasize that although certain amounts of these gorgeous dark chunks of stress relieving, mind blowing, sense infusing goodies are great for you, you still need to remember that all important word.. moderation!!

Dark chocolate is indeed high in calories therefore make sure you use caution whilst devouring those bars of sheer ecstasy mmmm!

Short History of Chocolate

Aztec Indian legend held that cacao seeds had been brought from Paradise (and we feel that way too right girls?) and that wisdom and power came from eating the fruit of the cacao tree (for the men in our lives... see that's why we consume the amounts of chocolate that we do!)

A delicate tree, cacao is only grown in rain forests in the tropics, usually on large plantations, where it must be protected from wind and intense sunlight. The tree is harvested twice a year.

Milk chocolate was invented in 1876 by a Swiss chocolatier, Daniel Peter (1836-1919) of Vevey, Geneva. Daniel Peter successfully combined chocolate with powdered milk to produce the first milk chocolate. Today, the finest chocolate is still made in Switzerland, and the consumption of milk chocolate far outweighs that of plain chocolate.



Why is dark chocolate good for you?

High in antioxidants known as flavonoids, dark chocolate delivers an awesome nutritional wallop. Studies show that modest amounts—no more than 1 to 2 ounces—eaten every day can reduce risk of blood clots, lower blood pressure, increase endurance, improve skin quality, and even sharpen problem-solving skills. But put down that candy bar—notice the emphasis on *dark* chocolate, which has less sugar and 2 to 3 times more flavonoids than milk chocolate (white chocolate has none at all).

- Chocolate contains several nutrients, including potassium, iron and calcium. It also contains vitamins A1, B1, B2, C, D, and E.
- Chocolate contains magnesium. Magnesium deficiency has been linked to PMS (premenstrual syndrome), heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and joint problems.
- Chocolate contains phenylethylamine, a mild mood elevator that can make you feel better emotionally.
- Another reason eating chocolate can make you feel good is that it contains tryptophan, an amino acid that raises the serotonin levels in the brain. Serotonin is a natural stress reliever and anti-depressant. Serotonin can also help decrease your appetite, lessening your cravings for sweet and starchy foods.
- Endorphins, a natural pain reducer and mood elevator, are released by the brain to help you deal with pain. Endorphins are also produced when you exercise, which is why people often feel pretty good after a rigorous workout. Chocolate, which stimulates the production of endorphins, can give you a feeling similar to a "runner's high."
- The cocoa butter in chocolate contains a mono-unsaturated fat called oleic acid, which could help to raise your "good cholesterol" levels. Also, chocolate has been found to have no effect on "bad cholesterol," meaning it will neither increase nor decrease it.
- Eating chocolate could help increase antioxidant levels in your blood. Antioxidants help your body's cells resist damage caused by free radicals. Antioxidants help prevent heart disease, and help fight against cancer-causing elements.

Keeping all these fabulous benefits in mind who are we to say no to chocolate... right girls??

So here we have some exotic ways to indulge your chocoholic dreams!!

Low carb and low cal Chocolate Cake

You can have your cake and eat it too - even on a diet! This low carbohydrate and low calorie chocolate cake will satisfy your chocolate craving while on a diet. I created this recipe because I wanted a low carbohydrate chocolate dessert for myself. Just watch your portion size.

7 1/4-ounces dark chocolate (65% to 70% cocoa), room temperature & chopped into pieces
1/2 cup butter, cut into small cubes
6 large eggs, room temperature and separated
1/3 cup sugar
1/3 cup Splenda
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon powdered (confectioners) sugar, for garnish

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

In a large metal bowl set over a pan of hot, not simmering, water (bottom of the bowl should not touch the water), combine the chocolate and butter and let stand, stirring occasionally, until smooth and melted. (The mixture can be melted in the microwave on high power, stirring every 15 seconds. Remove when there are still a few lumps of chocolate and stir until fully melted).

In a medium-size bowl, combine the 6 egg yolks, sugar, and Splenda. Add this to the melted chocolate/butter mixture and vanilla extract and stir to combine. **IMPORTANT: Be sure to add the beaten eggs to the chocolate mixture and not the chocolate to the eggs. This will insure a moist airy texture.**

In a large bowl, whip the 6 egg whites until firm. Add 1/3 of the whites to the chocolate mixture and stir to lighten the batter. Gently fold in the remaining egg whites until just blended and no streaks remain. Finish by using a rubber spatula to ensure that the heavier mixture at the bottom is incorporated.

Scrape the batter into a non-stick 10" springform pan and smooth top with the spatula.

Bake approximately 20 minutes or until just set (do not overcook). Remove from oven and let cool. Cake will collapse some while cooling. Which is fine as it tastes absolutely yummilicious!!

To Unmold: Run a thin metal spatula around the side of the cake and release the sides of the springform pan. The chocolate cake will store up to 2 weeks refrigerated. Do not freeze because it changes the texture.

When ready to serve, bring to room temperature. Cut into narrow wedges with a thin sharp knife that has been dipped in hot water. Dust with sifted powdered sugar before serving.

Molten Lava Cake

4 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped into small pieces
4 ounces semi-sweet chocolate, chopped into small pieces
3/4 cup unsalted butter, cut into pieces
4 eggs
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon instant espresso powder or 2 teaspoons instant coffee granules
1/2 teaspoon salt
Shaved Chocolate

Preheat oven to 375°F. Liberally spray six (6-ounce) ramekins with nonstick spray. In a small saucepan over low heat melt the chocolate and butter, stirring often to prevent burning. Remove from heat and cool.

In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs and sugar with electric hand mixer until "ribbon" stage, approximately 7 minutes. At that stage, it will be pale yellow and look like lightly whipped cream.

Add flour, cocoa powder, vanilla extract, espresso powder, and salt. Beat the batter for 2 additional minutes; add the melted chocolate mixture and beat another 5 minutes. (The batter needs a lot of beating. This incorporates air, lightening the cake's texture.)

Scoop the batter into the prepared ramekins, approximately 3/4 cup of batter in each ramekin. NOTE: At this point, the cakes can be refrigerated and then baked later.

When ready to bake, place the ramekins on a baking sheet and bake 15 to 17 minutes or until puffed and mostly dry on top around edges. NOTE: It's critical to bake these cakes for the right amount of time. Otherwise, they'll either be way too "molten," or end up as brownies. Oven temperatures vary, so check the cakes after 15 minutes. If they're really moist on top, bake one minute and check again.

Remove cakes from oven and let rest 3 minutes (it's okay if they sink a little).

To unmold, place serving plate on top of ramekin and invert. Carefully remove ramekin, tapping lightly on the plate to loosen cake. Serve the molten cakes warm with shaved dark chocolate sprinkled on top.

Makes 6 servings.

Mindblowing Hot Chocolate

6 ounces fine-quality semisweet or bittersweet chocolate, chopped
1/4 cup water, room temperature
3 tablespoons hot water
3 cups skimmed hot milk
Sugar to taste
Whipped cream, if desired

In a double boiler over low heat, combine chocolate and 1/4 cup water until melted, stirring occasionally; stir until smooth.

Remove top of double boiler pan from. Whisk in 3 tablespoons hot water. Pour into pitcher or divide among individual 4 mugs. Either stir 3/4 cup hot milk into each mug or serve milk in a separate pitcher. Pass sugar and whipped cream in separate bowls; add to taste.

Makes 4 servings.

Decadent Hot Chocolate

A delightful, gourmet hot chocolate. don't worry about the calories, just enjoy! This will not only impress your guests, but also yourself.

1 tea pot full of Hot Chocolate as per recipe
Tea cups
Whipped cream
Curls of dark dark chocolate

Prepare Hot Chocolate. Place a dollop of whipped cream in the bottom of each tea cup. Place a curl of white chocolate and a curl of milk chocolate in the cup over or beside the dollop of whipped cream.

Pour prepared Hot Chocolate over the top of the ingredients. The whipped cream will rise to the top and the chocolate curls will start melting. **NOTE: Timing is important in making this hot chocolate, as you need to hand the person the cup right before you pour the hot chocolate into it.**

You will never want to waste your calories on ordinary hot chocolate or ordinary chocolate cake ever again. Save your calories for the mind altering chocolicious indulgences!! The luxurious dark chocolate fix will have you spinning in Chocospace!!

