Make Chocolate Healthy Again: Fast and Easy DIY Homemade Chocolate

Few foods can induce a craving like chocolate. From its aroma to how it melts in your mouth to what it does for your body – the whole experience is heavenly. The effects of chocolate are experienced by everyone, not just chocolate lovers.

In fact, studies have found that the unique smell of chocolate changes our brain activity and makes us more alert. Once the chocolate is consumed, its flavonoids work as prebiotics and improve digestive health. The flavonoids that make it into the blood stream help improve your insulin sensitivity, lower blood pressure, and prevent plaque from building up in your arteries.

Chocolate contains a unique combination of caffeine and theobromine as well. These two work together to protect brain function and improve mood without causing the sleep disturbances or other side effects caused by caffeine consumption.

After reading about all of the good that chocolate can do for us, you may be tempted to head to your corner store and buy some right now. But before you do, it is important to know and understand that most chocolate bars are terrible for your health.

Most Chocolate Bars are Unhealthy

The most popular form of chocolate is milk chocolate. Most milk chocolate bars only contain about 11% cacao with the remaining ~90% of the bar consisting of milk, sugar, and other unhealthy ingredients. If these chocolate bars were named

honestly, they'd be called "Chocolate Flavored Sugar-Milk Bars".



Not so attractive now, huh?

On top of that, the milk binds to cacao antioxidants (including the flavonoids we talked about earlier) and renders them inactive. So when the sugar in the milk chocolate bar spikes your blood sugar and increases inflammation, the flavonoids can't save you because the milk ingredients made them inactive.

Isn't Dark Chocolate Healthy?

Most dark chocolate bars are only 60-70% dark chocolate, which means that that the rest of it is made up of processed sugar and other dubious ingredients like soy lecithin and milk solids. Even the 85% or higher dark chocolate bars shouldn't be considered healthy. They are highly processed and still contain some milk products, sugar, and other additives in an effort to make the chocolate less bitter and more palatable.

If you come across a chocolate bar produced with minimal, unrefined sugar and simple ingredients like cacao and vanilla beans, then at least the chocolate likely has some health benefits – but it will cost you.

These bars are expensive! Plus the processing that they went through before becoming pretty little bars will render some of the antioxidants in the cacao inactive.

After learning all of this, we are left only one good option – to make our own chocolate.

How To Make Your Own Chocolate

That’s right, you can make your own chocolate!

The best part is you won’t need any fancy machinery, and it won’t take up to seven days to make it (like it does in most chocolate factories).

All you need is cacao powder and coconut oil. Look for raw, organic cacao powder for your health, and make sure it’s fair trade for the health of others.

Can’t Eat Chocolate? If you are sensitive to chocolate for any reason or just don’t want the caffeine it comes with, then replace cacao powder with carob powder. The carob-based chocolate will not taste too much like chocolate, but it will make a delicious and healthy snack.

Step 1 – Melt and Mix

Melt the coconut oil in a pan at the low heat. Once the coconut oil is completely liquefied, mix in the same amount of cacao powder until you have a homogeneous chocolate mixture. The lower the heat, the more you preserve the health benefits.

Use a 1:1 ratio of cacao powder to coconut oil.

I recommend starting with a smaller amount like a quarter cup

of each. Once you develop a delicious recipe, however, all restrictions are off – make as much chocolate as you want.

Step 2 – Experiment and Solidify

Now that you have your chocolate liquid, turn off the heat source and add in whatever you want to be in your chocolate.

You can put in a sweetener, mix in some nuts and seeds for some crunch, or add in some cinnamon and vanilla powder to make it taste even better. Dried fruit– like dried blueberries, cherries, goji berries, and mulberries – is another ingredient option that will add more flavor and health benefits to your chocolate.

Once you finish mixing in your extra ingredients, pour the mixture into a plate, cookie sheet, or container, and put it in the fridge until it solidifies (2-4 hours).

Step 3 – Eat and Enjoy



Go to the refrigerator, break off a piece of your chocolate, and enjoy.

Why Homemade Chocolate is Much

Better Than Store-Bought Chocolate

Although it is easy to make chocolate at home, you may still be tempted to buy the dark chocolate on the grocery store shelves. This homemade variety will not look as “perfect” in that commercial way as store bought chocolate bars. The differing tastes and textures may take some getting used to for some, but it will taste amazing once you get your recipe down, and it will be so much healthier. In fact, if you are a frequent cocoa consumer, you’ll grow to prefer the taste of your homemade chocolate very quickly, and then you will probably despise pretty much everything else out there.

Coconut Oil – One of the Healthiest Sources of Fat

Coconut oil is the perfect fat to use when making chocolate because it solidifies and melts in your mouth like a typical chocolate bar. But this isn’t the only reason why it is part of our chocolate recipe.

Coconut oil has the highest percentage of medium chain triglycerides (MCTs) than any other fat source. But MCTs are technically saturated fat, so doesn’t this mean that they are “unhealthy”? This is where some knowledge of biochemistry comes in handy.

There are many different types of saturated fats, and they are processed by the body in different ways. MCTs (fats with 6-12 carbon atoms) are different from the long chain fatty acids (fats with more than 12 carbon atoms). This is because most of the MCTs are transported directly to the liver after digestion rather than flowing throw the lymph system of the body like long chain fatty acids.

Once the MCTs reach the liver they are converted into energy and other metabolites. These metabolites include ketone

bodies, which can be used by the brain and heart as an immediate form of energy. The MCTs in coconut oil can also increase your feeling of fullness for a longer period of time.

Related: *35 Things You Could Do With Coconut Oil – From Body Care to Health to Household*

Erythritol – The Safest Sugar Alternative?

Erythritol is considered by many to be the safest low-calorie sweetener. It is a sugar alcohol that is less sweet than sugar (70% as sweet as sugar), so it will not stimulate your appetite as much as sweeteners like sucralose (these artificial sweeteners do far more harm than good). There is debate amongst the natural health community, and within this magazine, as to whether or not stevia is a safer choice for most, or if erythritol is a better option. It likely depends on how you use them and your own gut health.

Studies have shown erythritol can cause nausea and stomach discomfort. These side effects were only found in people that consumed 50 grams of erythritol in one sitting.

To give you some context, 50 grams (about 4 tablespoons) of erythritol has the same sweetness as about 40 grams (3 and 1/3 tablespoons) of sugar. This is 16 more grams of sugar than you will find in a typical 1.55 ounce “Sugar Milk Bar with Chocolate Added”. One to two tablespoons of erythritol should be more than enough to make your homemade chocolate more palatable without getting any side effects.

But this doesn’t mean that you should buy any sugar alcohol or any form of erythritol and assume that it will be safe. Other sugar alcohols like xylitol tend to cause more side effects at lower doses than erythritol, and erythritol is commonly made from GMO cornstarch. If you don’t want a dose of negative side effects, GMOs, or pesticides with your sweetener than it is

best to use non-GMO erythritol.

> *I like to use a small amount of erythritol, a tiny bit of stevia, and some raw honey for sweetening. I also like to mix the chocolate with the carob which has a natural sweetness to it. I don't like it very sweet, and I like to throw in ginger, cayenne, cinnamon, and/or other herbs that can help keep the gut balanced. I like my chocolate to have quite a bit of kick to it, just like my smoothies. Be careful and patient with the honey. It's even easier to cook the benefits out of honey than it is with chocolate. I don't think erythritol is particularly good for you, and while raw honey has plenty of health benefits, for good health it should be eaten in very small quantities. I find the mix of the three works well for my tastebuds and my body." – Michael Edwards*

The Importance of Raw Organic Cacao Powder

Even if you don't like the taste of chocolate, you may want to consume cacao powder as a way to reap all of the benefits that we talked about earlier in the article.

To ensure that you get all of the health benefits of cacao, it is best to buy raw organic cacao powder. Quality cacao powder is important because most cacao powders (and the cacao used to make chocolate) are processed with heat and alkali, which destroys cacao's health-promoting antioxidants.

But what do you do if you want to keep caffeine and chocolate out of your diet?

The Many Benefits of Carob-based Chocolate

Although this article praises the medicinal properties of

cacao, this doesn't mean that you are missing out if you don't eat it. In fact, carob powder may have even more health benefits than cacao powder. For example, carob powder is most well-known for its anti-diarrhea effects, but that is not all this delicious powder has to offer.

Like cacao powder, carob powder contains many flavonoids. One of the flavonoids it contains is quercetin, which is known to reduce allergy symptoms, prevent heart disease (like cacao's flavonoids do), and protect against cancer. Carob powder also contains a compound called gallic acid which is known to scavenge free radicals and kill cancer cells.

If you compare these benefits with cacao powder, carob powder looks like it could be the winner here. After weeks of experimenting with using carob powder in smoothies and other recipes (that I usually put cacao powder in), I completely agree. Healthy dark chocolate tends to over-stimulate me, but when I use carob powder instead, I feel more satiated and energetically balanced.

Recommended Reading:

- *The Case for Carob – This Chocolate Alternative Has A Lot to Offer*
- *One More Reason to Love Chocolate (Recipe Included)*
- *35 Things You Could Do With Coconut Oil – From Body Care to Health to Household*
- *Is Caffeine Making You Fat?*

Sources:

- *Artificial Sweeteners* – Harvard
- *Critical review of the current literature on the safety of sucralose* – Science Direct
- *Toxicology of Rebaudioside A: A Review* – UCLA
- *Baking and Cooking With Sugar Substitutes* – Diabetes Self-Management
- *Stevia (Stevia rebaudiana) a bio-sweetener: a review.* –

Europe PMC
- *Erythritol – Like Sugar Without The Calories* – Authority Nutrition
- *Gastrointestinal tolerance of erythritol and xylitol ingested in a liquid* – Nature
- *Serum glucose and insulin levels and erythritol balance after oral administration of erythritol in healthy subjects.* – NCBI
- *Digestion and absorption of fats* – University of Washington
- *The Properties of Lauric Acid and Their Significance in Coconut Oil* – Springer Link
- *Effects of medium-chain triglycerides on weight loss and body composition: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials.* – NCBI
- *MCT Oil 101 – A Review of Medium-Chain Triglycerides* – Authority Nutrition
- *Chemistry and Biological Activities of Flavonoids: An Overview* – Hindawi
- *Health Benefits of Methylxanthines in Cacao and Chocolate* – MDPI
- *Daily cocoa intake reduces the susceptibility of low-density lipoprotein to oxidation as demonstrated in healthy human volunteers* – Taylor & Francis Online
- *Impact of alkalization on the antioxidant and flavanol content of commercial cocoa powders.* – NCBI
- *Isolation and structure elucidation of the major individual polyphenols in carob fibre* – Science Direct
- *Dark Chocolate* – University of Michigan
- *Human electroencephalographic (EEG) response to olfactory stimulation: Two experiments using the aroma of food* – Science Direct
- *Carob Powder: 9 Nutrition Facts and Health Benefits* – Healthline
- *Quercetin* – University of Maryland