

How to make the most chocolatey hot chocolate

From the sweeties.net wiki

If you want a truly chocolatey hot chocolate, the most important decision is the first one: make it with chocolate.

Chocolate or cocoa?

There is a real difference between hot cocoa and hot chocolate. Hot cocoa is made from cocoa powder, which is ground cacao with most of the cocoa butter pressed out. That idea dates from 1828, when Coenraad van Houten in the Netherlands built a press to separate the cocoa butter. Powder stirs easily into milk, but it has lost much of the richness.

Hot chocolate made from real chocolate keeps all that cocoa butter. The result is thicker, richer and less sweet. When chocolate melts into hot milk and cream, the fat and the liquid combine into a smooth mixture, the same principle as a ganache, the chocolate and cream mixture used in truffles and cake fillings.

Our method for one big mug

You will need:

- 300 ml whole milk
- 50 ml double cream
- 60 g good dark chocolate, chopped small
- 1 heaped teaspoon cocoa powder
- Sugar to taste, about 1 or 2 teaspoons
- Optional: 1 level teaspoon of cornflour, for a thick European style drink

Method:

1. Warm the milk and cream in a small pan over a medium heat until steaming, but do not let it boil.
2. In a mug or jug, mix the cocoa powder, sugar and cornflour, if using, with a splash of the warm milk to make a smooth paste.
3. Take the pan off the heat and add the chopped chocolate. Leave it for a minute, then whisk until it has melted completely.
4. Whisk in the cocoa paste, return the pan to a low heat and stir for a minute or two until it thickens slightly. If you added cornflour, let it bubble very gently for a minute to cook out.
5. Pour into a warm mug.

Using both chocolate and a little cocoa powder gives the richness of the cocoa butter and a stronger cocoa flavour on top.

Make it even thicker

In Spain, hot chocolate served with churros can be as thick as warm chocolate pudding, and the Italian cioccolata calda is thick too. Both are often thickened with cornflour. In Vienna one traditional version adds an egg yolk. In some Belgian cafes you are served a cup of hot milk with a bowl of chocolate pieces to stir in yourself.

Toppings

Try whipped cream or marshmallows on top. Grated chocolate on top never hurts. For marshmallows that melt in properly, see [how to melt marshmallows](#).

A drink with a long history

The first chocolate was a drink, not a bar. The Maya made a cold, foamy drink of ground cacao with water, vanilla, cornmeal and chilli, pouring it from cup to pot to raise a froth. Chocolate reached Europe from Mexico and became a luxury for the rich. London's first chocolate house opened in 1657. The solid chocolate bar only came along in 1847.

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