



cocoa

Cruising Review

**Cocoa: Publications and Research from
SwissMixIt**



This webpage QR code

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Seeds from a small tropical American evergreen tree, from which cocoa, cocoa butter, and chocolate are made. Chocolate comes from cocoa, which comes from processing cocoa. Cocoa contains more phenolic antioxidants than most foods. Flavonoids, including catechin, epicatechin, and procyanidins predominate in antioxidant activity. Cocoa is a rich source of high-quality antioxidant polyphenols. In moderately photo-aged women, regular cocoa flavanol consumption had positive effects on facial wrinkles and elasticity. Cocoa flavanol supplementation may contribute to the prevention of the progression of photo-aging. Cocoa contains about 380 known chemicals, 10 of which are psychoactive compounds. In their natural state, cocoa beans are virtually inedible because of their high concentration of polyphenols, which gives them an extremely bitter flavor. In a final cocoa product such as chocolate, polyphenol content might decrease from 100 percent to 10 percent throughout the different manufacturing processes.

PDF Version of the webpage (first pages)

Cocoa Botanical Information

Seeds from a small tropical American evergreen tree, from which cocoa, cocoa butter, and chocolate are made. Chocolate comes from cocoa, which comes from processing cocoa. Cocoa contains more phenolic antioxidants than most foods. Flavonoids, including catechin, epicatechin, and procyanidins predominate in antioxidant activity. Cocoa is a rich source of high-quality antioxidant polyphenols. In moderately photo-aged women, regular cocoa flavanol consumption had positive effects on facial wrinkles and elasticity. Cocoa flavanol supplementation may contribute to the prevention of the progression of photo-aging. Cocoa contains about 380 known chemicals, 10 of which are psychoactive compounds. In their natural state, cocoa beans are virtually inedible because of their high concentration of polyphenols, which gives them an extremely bitter flavor. In a final cocoa product such as chocolate, polyphenol content might decrease from 100 percent to 10 percent throughout the different manufacturing processes.

Keywords: cacao, Theobroma cacao, chocolate, cocoa, Food of the Gods, Theobroma cacao, nitric oxide, cardiovascular effects, flavanols, proanthocyanidins, cardiovascular health

Description and Research Abstract: Seeds from a small tropical American evergreen tree, from which cocoa, cocoa butter, and chocolate are made. Chocolate comes from cocoa, which comes from processing cocoa. Cocoa contains more phenolic antioxidants than most foods. Flavonoids, including catechin, epicatechin, and procyanidins predominate in antioxidant activity. Cocoa is a rich source of high-quality antioxidant polyphenols. In moderately photo-aged women, regular cocoa flavanol consumption had positive effects on facial wrinkles and elasticity. Cocoa flavanol supplementation may contribute to the prevention of the progression of photo-aging. Cocoa contains about 380 known chemicals, 10 of which are psychoactive compounds. In their natural state, cocoa beans are virtually inedible because of their high concentration of polyphenols, which gives them an extremely bitter flavor. In a final cocoa product such as chocolate, polyphenol content might decrease from 100 percent to 10 percent throughout the different manufacturing processes. Beyond antioxidant properties, cocoa polyphenols exert blood pressure lowering activity, antiplatelet, anti-inflammatory, metabolic and anti-atherosclerotic effects, and also improve endothelial function. Cocoa contains more phenolic antioxidants than most foods. Flavonoids, including catechin, epicatechin, and procyanidins predominate in antioxidant activity. The tricyclic structure of the flavonoids determines antioxidant effects that scavenge reactive oxygen species, chelate Fe²⁺ and Cu⁺, inhibit enzymes, and upregulate antioxidant defenses. The epicatechin content of cocoa is primarily responsible for its favorable impact on vascular endothelium via its effect on both acute and chronic upregulation of nitric oxide production. Other cardiovascular effects are mediated through anti-inflammatory effects of cocoa polyphenols, and modulated through the activity of NF- κ B. Antioxidant effects of cocoa may directly influence insulin resistance and, in turn, reduce risk for diabetes. Further, cocoa consumption may stimulate changes in redox-sensitive signaling pathways involved in gene expression and the immune response. Cocoa can protect nerves from injury and inflammation, protect the skin from oxidative damage from UV radiation in topical preparations, and have beneficial effects on satiety, cognitive function, and mood. Chocolate is well known for its fine flavor, and its history began in ancient times, when the Maya considered chocolate (a cocoa drink prepared with hot water) the Food of the Gods. Interest in chocolate has grown, owing to its physiological and potential health effects, such as regulation of blood pressure, insulin levels, vascular functions, oxidation processes, prebiotic effects, glucose homeostasis, and lipid metabolism. This paper compiles the beneficial effects of cocoa polyphenols on human health, especially with regard to cardiovascular and inflammatory diseases, metabolic disorders, and cancer prevention. Their antioxidant properties may be responsible for many of their pharmacological effects, including the inhibition of lipid peroxidation and the protection of LDL-cholesterol against oxidation, and increase resistance to oxidative stress. The phenolics from cocoa also modify the glycemic response and the lipid profile, decreasing platelet function and inflammation along with diastolic and systolic arterial pressures, which, taken together, may reduce the risk of cardiovascular mortality. Cocoa polyphenols can also modulate intestinal inflammation through the reduction of neutrophil infiltration and expression of different transcription factors, which leads to decreases in the production of proinflammatory enzymes and cytokines. The phenolics from cocoa may thus protect against diseases in which oxidative stress is implicated as a causal or contributing factor, such as cancer. They also have antiproliferative, antimutagenic, and chemoprotective effects, in addition to their anticarcinogenic effects.
