

“Food Of The Gods”  
Chocolate Drink  
And  
Metheglin - Chocolate Mead  
By: Pierre de Montereau

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## History of Mead

Mead has its origin in Africa back 20,000 to 40,000 years ago. It is mentioned in the Bible, Beowulf, Aeneid and the Rig-Veda and was sacred to Bacchus, the Roman god of wine. In Spain from 7,000 B.C. there is cave painting of earliest records of beekeeping and in 2,100 B.C. Sumerian and Babylonian writing about the honey. Mead making which is a pleasant alcohol from honey, water and fermented by yeast had a rich history from Norse, Anglo-Saxon, Celts, Roman, Greek and Egyptian.<sup>(1,2,3,4)</sup>

Over 1 million years ago, the honeybee separated from its parent species from the DNA sequence. Millennia, the honeybee battle against indigenous yeast while it gathers pollen and nectar. Nectar, which is low sugar content, can experience spontaneous fermentation with the action of wild yeast. That would not be good for the honeybee since the need the nectar for the life cycle. The honeybee converts the 12-carbon sugar, Sucrose, into two 6-carbon sugars, Fructose and Glucose in the stomach. By drying the honey the bees learned that it is less suitable for fermentation by native yeast.<sup>(1)</sup>

In the beginning, the only way to extract the honey and the beeswax was to crush the honeycombs. That would destroy the honeycomb and any bees. Then the crushed honey/beeswax was easily processed by rinsing the honey out of the beeswax with warm water. The beeswax was used for candles, and the list goes on. The honey water is leftover. So what can we do with that? Mead of course. That process continued until the first mechanized extraction meant less left over combs which meant less honey water. The general decline of mead making and the craft was the result that process.<sup>(1)</sup>

Nomadic people first indication of the knowledge of mead was about 20,000 years ago in Africa. That yeast that first bees bio-engineered almost a million years ago to make honey. It is common for the extreme conditions of drought during the dry season and very heavy rain in the wet season. The elephants roamed the area and weather patterns were seasonal as it is today in Africa. When elephants break the branches of the Baobab and Miombo trees, the weather pattern would cause some trees to rot out the crown. Bees would nest in the hollows tree in the dry season and would fill up with water in the wet season. With the water, the honey from the bee hive, osmotolerant yeast and time, Mead is born. The African Bushman and tribes gathered the liquid which we now know as Mead. When the people left Africa and went into the Mediterranean they took the bees, honey and unknowingly, the osmotolerant yeasts, they took the knowledge of mead and mead making with them. They continue making mead and the fermentation was a hit and miss result in good, bad and/or undrinkable mead. Also, the process to convert water into mead has a benefit because some water was unsafe but when you process into wine, beer and/or mead, it became safe. The use of heavy spice mead was the fact that the water did not purify and in the fermentation, it will create an off flavour and after taste. The process continue until Louis Pasteur in the 1841 helped understand the process of the yeast as a life form and the fermentation.<sup>(1,2,4)</sup>

Europe, India and China knew how to make mead but the mead almost died out because of urbanized. That happened in India about 1,700 years ago, China in 1,500 years ago

and Europe in the 500 years ago. In Europe, it was around 1300 A.D. with Marco Polo (1254-1324) return with an inexperienced source of sugar cane in the Spice Island. The mead process almost died out but the monasteries of Europe still use the honey and beeswax for ceremonial candles and the honey surplus was used to make mead which the monks enjoyed. Today, with over 400 years of traditions, the monasteries in Great Britain still make mead.

## **History of Cocoa**

Chocolate! It was originally drunk and not eaten!

Chocolate begins with a bean ... a cacao bean. It has been mashed and eaten for centuries. The history of chocolate spans from around 200 B.C. to the present, encompassing many nations and peoples of our world.

Cacao (*Theobroma cacao*) is a small (12-25 ft tall) evergreen tree in the family Sterculiaceae (alternatively Malvaceae), native to tropical South America, but now cultivated throughout the tropics. The name "Theobroma Cacao" which means "food of the god." Its seeds are used to make cocoa and chocolate.

The tree grows naturally in the low foothills of the Andes at elevations of around 600 – 1,200 ft in the Amazon and Orinoco river basins; it is believed to have been introduced to Central America by the Maya people. It requires a humid climate with regular rainfall and good soil. It is an understory tree, growing best with some overhead shade. The leaves are alternate, entire, unlobed, 4.5-18 inches long and 2.5–4 inches broad.

The flowers are produced in clusters directly on the trunk and older branches; they are small, ½ - 1 inches diameter, with pink calyx. The fruit, called a cacao pod, is oval, 6–12 inches long and 4–5 inches wide, ripening yellow to orange, and weighs about 500 g when ripe. The pod contains 20 to 60 seeds, usually called "beans", embedded in a white pulp. Each seed contains a significant amount of fat (40–50% as cocoa butter).

A tree begins to bear when 4 or 5 years old. In one year, when mature, it may have 6,000 flowers, but only about 20 pods.

The potential age of a tree is open to speculation. There are individual trees known to be over 200 years of age, but no one has determined the real life span of the species. However, in 25 years the economic usefulness of a tree may be considered at an end, and it often becomes desirable to replant with younger trees.

It requires training and experience to know by appearance which fruit is ripe and ready to be cut. Ripe pods are found on trees at all times since the growing season in the tropics, with its evenly distributed rainfall, is continuous.

Gathers follow the harvesters who have removed the ripe pods from the trees. The pods are collected in baskets and transported to the edge of a field where the pod breaking



Figure #1: Open the Pod (End Note #5)

operation begins. One or two lengthwise blows from a well-wielded machete is usually enough to split open the woody shells. A good breaker can open 500 pods an hour.

A great deal of patience is required to complete harvesting. Anywhere from 20 to 50 cream-colored beans are scooped from a typical pod and the husk and inner membrane are discarded. The average pod weigh less than two ounces, and approximately 400 beans are required to make one pound of chocolate.

The beans are still many steps away from the familiar finished product. Exposure to air quickly changes the cream-colored beans to a lavender or purple. They do not look like the finished chocolate nor do they have the well-known fragrance of chocolate at this time.

The cocoa beans or seeds that are removed from the pods are put into boxes or thrown on heaps and covered. Around the beans is a layer of pulp that starts to heat up and ferment. Fermentation lasts from three to nine days and serves to remove the raw bitter taste of cocoa and to develop precursors and components that are characteristic of chocolate flavor.



Figure #2: Cocoa Beans (End Note #6)

The process generates temperatures as high as 125 degrees Fahrenheit, which kill the germ of the bean and activate existing enzymes in the beans to form compounds that produce the chocolate flavor when the beans are roasted. The result is a fully developed bean with a rich brown color, a sign that the cocoa is now ready for drying.

For thousands of years the Mexican Indian turned cocoa beans into the "food of the gods", as a drink that was both fermented and non-fermented. The beans or seeds were an very important socially, religiously, medically, economically ( as currency ), and gastronomically. There are many hieroglyphic writings that show the various uses of the cacao bean, one of them is of the Maya Gods shedding blood over the Cacao beans! Aztec Indian legend held that cacao seeds had been brought from Paradise and that wisdom and power came from eating the fruit of the cacao tree.

Ancient chronicles report that the Aztecs, believing that the god Quetzalcoatl traveled to earth on a beam of the Morning Star with a cacao tree from Paradise, took his offering to the people. They learned from Quetzalcoatl how to roast and grind the cacao seeds, making a nourishing paste that could be dissolved in water. They added spices and called

this drink "chocolatl," or bitter-water, and believed it brought universal wisdom and knowledge.

The Maya brewed a spicy, bitter sweet drink by roasting and pounding the seeds of the Cacao tree (cocoa beans) with maize and Capsicum (Chilli) peppers and letting the mixture ferment. This drink was reserved for use in ceremonies as well as for drinking by the wealthy and religious elite, they also ate a Cacao porridge.

The Aztec's regarded chocolate as an aphrodisiac and their Emperor, Montezuma reputedly drank it fifty times a day from a golden goblet and is quoted as saying of Xocolatl: "The divine drink, which builds up resistance and fights fatigue. A cup of this precious drink permits a man to walk for a whole day without food"

In an archaeology dig, a pottery jar was found in a Maya tomb that had a cacao glyph on it. It was taken to the Hershey Company's chemistry lab, where it was proven that chocolate drink was in the jar and they would have drunk it on a regular basis.

The Aztecs called this drink Xocolatl, the Spanish conquistadors found this almost impossible to pronounce and so corrupted it to the easier 'Chocolat', the English further changed this to Chocolate.

In 1519, Hernando Cortez tasted "Cacahuatt," a drink enjoyed by Montezuma II, the last Aztec emperor.

In fact, the Aztec's prized Xocolatl well above Gold and Silver so much so, that when Montezuma was defeated by Cortez in 1519 and the victorious 'conquistadors' searched his palace for the Aztec treasury expecting to find Gold & Silver, all they found were huge quantities of cocoa beans. The Aztec Treasury consisted, not of precious metals, but Cocoa Beans.

Aztec Indians using cocoa beans in the preparation of the royal drink of the realm, "chocolatl", meaning warm liquid. In 1519, Emperor Montezuma, who reportedly drank 50 or more portions daily, served chocolatl to his Spanish guests in great golden goblets, treating it like a food for the gods.

Xocolatl! or Chocolat or Chocolate as it became known, was brought to Europe by Cortez, by this time the conquistadors had learned to make the drink more palatable to European tastes by mixing the ground roasted beans with sugar and vanilla (a practice still continued today), thus offsetting the spicy bitterness of the brew the Aztec's drank.

Cortez observed that the Aztecs treated cacao beans, used to make the drink, as priceless treasures. He subsequently brought the beans back to Spain where the chocolate drink was made and then heated with added sweeteners. Its formula was kept a secret to be enjoyed by nobility. Eventually, the secret was revealed and the drink's fame spread to other lands.

The first chocolate factories opened in Spain, where the dried fermented beans brought back from the new world by the Spanish treasure fleets were roasted and ground, and by the early 17th century chocolate powder - from which the European version of the drink was made - was being exported to other parts of Europe. The Spanish kept the source of the drink - the beans - a secret for many years, so successfully in fact, that when English buccaneers boarded what they thought was a Spanish 'Treasure Galleon' in 1579, only to find it loaded with what appeared to be 'dried sheep's droppings', they burned the whole ship in frustration. If only they had known, chocolate was so expensive at that time, that it was worth its weight in Silver (if not Gold), Chocolate was Treasure Indeed!

The new drink won friends, especially among the Spanish aristocracy. Spain wisely proceeded to plant cocoa in its overseas colonies, which gave birth to a very profitable business. Remarkably enough, the Spanish succeeded in keeping the art of the cocoa industry a secret from the rest of Europe for nearly a hundred years.

"With the decline of Spain as a power, the secret of cacao leaked out at last, and the Spanish Crown's monopoly of the chocolate trade came to an end. In a few years the knowledge of it had spread through France, Italy, Germany, and England."

The first Chocolate House in England opened in London in 1657 followed rapidly by many others. Like the already well established coffee houses, they were used as clubs where the wealthy and business community met to smoke a clay pipe of tobacco, conduct business and socialise over a cup of chocolate.

The first mention of chocolate being eaten in solid form is when bakers in England began adding cocoa powder to cakes in the mid 1600's.

## Scientific classification



Figure #3: Cacao tree (End Note #7)

## *Cacao*

Cacao tree with fruit pods

### Scientific classification

Kingdom: Plantae  
Division: Magnoliophyta  
Class: Magnoliopsida  
Order: Malvales  
Family: Sterculiaceae  
Genus: Theobroma  
Species: T. cacao  
Binomial name: Theobroma cacao L.

## Did they make Chocolate Drink, Mead/Wine in Period?

The Maya had honey, chocolate and the process of making the Drink because they made balché, the bark of the balché tree (*Lonchocarpus violaceus*) soaking in honey water. Also they said “a drink that was both fermented and non-fermented.” So we know that Maya made some sort of Chocolate Drink and Chocolate Mead/Wine. For the European, all the basic ingredients were there by the 16<sup>th</sup> Century in Spain including Cocoa, Honey, and Water. We cannot know if they made Chocolate Drink and Chocolate Mead/Wine in period because I research Chocolate Drink and Chocolate Mead/Wine and there is no manuscripts, documents, period recipes to make a chocolate drink and mead/wine, etc but because the ingredients was there and thousands of years, Mexican Indian turn cocoa bean into the “food of the god”, as a drink that was both fermented and non-fermented. They know how to make Mead/Wine so there is a potential to make the drink in Period. If they made Chocolate Mead/Wine, it would be a Metheglin – mead/wine made with spices and extracts.

## Chocolate Mead aka Liquid Sex Mead – Ingredients

Recipe by Capten Rhys ab Idwal ab Idris ap William ap Llewellyn ab Idris ap Daffyd gen y Arian Lloer Rimsholt, Barony of Andelcrag, Midrealm.

Web site: <http://www.ladybridget.com/m/chocmead.html>

<b>Ingredients</b>	<b>Quantities</b>
Honey	12 lbs
Cocoa Powder	16 oz
Water	
Wine Yeast	1 pkg

**S.G.** 15% alc.

### **Procedure:**

Simmer approx. 1 gal water at 160° F. Add honey and simmer, stirring to dissolve honey. Remove scum at the top of liquid, looks like white film. Then cool liquid until room temperature. The Cocoa is mix with warm water so it will be liquid. Put the Honey and the Cocoa Mix into the carboy. Add more water to get about 5 gallons of liquid. Pitch yeast to liquid and put the airlock on the carboy. Rack every month until mead to ferment out. Rack mead, and age in carboy for at less 3 months. Transfer some mead and mix with bentonite and then put that mixture back in to the carboy (looks like clay) and wait for 2 weeks more, rack. The Chocolate Mead is a dark brown colour and cannot see thru. The mead tasted good at bottling. It is medium sweet, and I find very enjoyable.

## Chocolate Twist - Ingredients

<b>Ingredients</b>	<b>Quantities</b>
Cocoa	16 oz
Vanilla beans	2
Nutmegs	1-2
Cinnamons	1-2
Honey	15 lbs
Wine Yeast	1 pkg

**S.G.** 21% alc.

### **Procedure:**

Simmer approx. 1 gal water at 160° F. Add honey and simmer, stirring to dissolve honey. Remove scum at the top of liquid, looks like white film. Then cool liquid until room temperature. The Cocoa is mix with warm water so it will be liquid. Put the Honey and the Cocoa Mix into the carboy. Add Vanilla Beans, Nutmegs, Cinnamons and put that in the carboy. Add more water to get about 5 gallons of liquid. Pitch yeast to liquid and put the airlock on the carboy. Rack every month until mead to ferment out. Rack mead, and age in carboy for at less 3 months. Transfer some mead and mix with bentonite and then

put that mixture back in to the carboy (looks like clay) and wait for 2 weeks more, rack. The Chocolate Twist Mead is a dark brown colour and cannot see thru. The mead tasted good at bottling. It is medium sweet, and I find very enjoyable.

### **Chocolate Drink – Ingredients:**

The Chocolate drink was an unsweetened, spicy, cold and frothy. The Aztecs drank Choclatl with various ingredients such as chilli, vanilla, flowers, black pepper and cinnamon and occasionally honey.

The Spanish preferred it sweetened and more often hot than cold. They use various ingredients such as aniseed, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, vanilla, allspice and sugar.

<b>Ingredients</b>	<b>Quantities</b>
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Club Dark Chocolate	*30g
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Vanilla	1 teaspoon
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Boiling Water	2/3 cups
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Spices to taste:

can include:

cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg, ginger or aniseed, for Spanish version

or

chilli, vanilla, black pepper, cinnamon, flowers for Aztec version

### **Procedure:**

Grate the chocolate and mix into paste, with boiling water. Add the rest of the water and vanilla and beat until frothy. Add other spices. The Spanish would served the drink hot and cold. The Aztec would served the drink cold and frothy.

\* The Unsweetened chocolate is hard to get. Do not use milk chocolate. So I used Club Dark Chocolate and did not add the sugar or honey.

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