

Hot Cocoa, Mexican Style

This very rich and satisfying winter drink is probably not as sweet as what you're used to: our version is all about the chocolate flavor and warming spices, traditional to the drink made and served in Mexico.

ADULT NEEDED: YES • HANDS-ON TIME: 10 MINUTES • TOTAL TIME: 10 MINUTES • MAKES: 2 SERVINGS

KITCHEN GEAR

Small pot
Measuring cup
Measuring spoons
Fork or whisk
2 mugs or cups

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cups low-fat or whole milk
1 ½ tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2 ½ teaspoons honey or sugar
¾ teaspoon vanilla extract
¾–1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
A pinch chili powder, if you like it spicy

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Put the milk in the pot. Put the pot on the stove and turn the heat to low.
2. Heat the milk until it is very warm, about 3 minutes. Be sure to keep your eye on it; you don't want it to boil or burn.
3. Turn the heat off and add the cocoa powder, honey, vanilla extract, cinnamon, and the chili powder, if you like it spicy. Using the whisk, whip the milk until the top is frothy.
4. Divide the cocoa between the mugs and serve right away.



What is the origin of cocoa? Chocolate starts out as seeds from the cacao tree, which are too bitter to eat. The word “cacao” probably came from the Olmec (the first Mexican civilization) word *kakawa*, more than 3,000 years ago. For hundreds of years, the Aztecs, Mayans, and other Central and South Americans used cacao beans in a spicy beverage, with flavorings like vanilla, chile, herbs, and flowers. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europeans added milk and sugar to the drink, making it resemble the hot chocolate of today.