**How is chocolate made?**

Chocolate comes from cocoa beans, which are the seeds of the cocoa tree. Cocoa trees can only live in hot, rainy places. They bear large fruit, called cocoa pods, which are shaped like rugby balls. If you open up a cocoa pod you will find lots of cocoa beans inside, like peas inside a peapod.

After cocoa pods are harvested, they are opened to remove the cocoa beans and their sticky covering. The beans are placed in piles or bins to ferment. The fermentation process takes between five and seven days. It is this process that gives the beans their distinctive chocolate flavour.

After fermentation, the beans are thoroughly dried to stop mould growing on them. If the weather is dry, the beans may be spread out in the sun. Drying can take up to a week.

The dried beans are then taken to a chocolate factory. At the factory, the beans are cleaned, roasted, and their skins are removed. They are ground into a paste and then melted to make a liquid called chocolate liquor. This can then be separated into cocoa solids (powder) and cocoa butter.

Chocolate liquor is blended with cocoa butter, sugar and other ingredients in varying quantities to make different types of chocolate. The blended chocolate is poured into a conch – a container filled with metal beads, which act as grinders. The conching process, which can take up to three days, makes the chocolate smoother.

The final process is called tempering. It consists of repeatedly heating and cooling the chocolate to particular temperatures. It gives the finished chocolate the right texture.

















