

*February's  
Spice of the Month  
Cocoa*



**What is cocoa spice?**

**Where Does Cocoa Come From?**

Although not often considered to be a spice, the seeds of the *Theobroma cacao* tree deserve to be thought of as an exotic, aromatic, flavor with medicinal values, i.e. as a spice. It originated in the Yucatan area of Mexico, and it was used as a hot drink by the Maya and as a cold, sweetened drink by the Aztecs. Linnaeus chose to call the chocolate tree *Theobroma*, meaning “food of the gods”, since it was used as an offering by the Maya and Aztecs in their religious ceremonies. The word “cacao” is from the Mayan, Ka-Ka-io; the word chocolate comes from Mayan “chocol” (hot) and Nahuatl “alt” (water) implying that the chocolate content of the bean was extracted by hot water.

# Hot Cocoa Marble Pound Cake



## Ingredients

- 2 sticks unsalted butter, room temperature, plus more for the pan
- 1 3/4 cups all purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon fine Mediterranean sea salt
- 4 large eggs, at room temperature
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1 teaspoon single strength Madagascar vanilla extract
- 1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup Classic Hot Cocoa Mix

## Preparation Instructions:

1. Position a rack in the lower third of the oven, and preheat to 325 degrees F.  
Butter a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan
2. Sift the flour and salt into a medium bowl. Whisk together the eggs, sour cream and vanilla in a small bowl.
3. Beat the butter in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until smooth. Gradually add the sugar, 1/4 cup at a time, to cream and lighten the butter.
4. Continue to beat the butter mixture until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Scrape down the bowl as needed.
5. Reduce the mixer speed to low. Beat in the flour, 1/4 cup at a time, then beat the batter for 30 seconds. Gradually beat in the egg mixture. (Take care not to overmix.)
6. Transfer about 1/3 of the batter to a medium bowl, and stir in the hot cocoa mix. Spoon 1/2 the remaining vanilla batter into the prepared loaf pan, and smooth over the top with a spatula. Using 1/2 the hot chocolate batter, drop spoonfuls on top of the vanilla batter. Repeat with the remaining vanilla and hot chocolate batters. Run a skewer through the loaf pan to help swirl the 2 batters together. Tap the pan on the counter.
7. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean and the top springs back when lightly pressed, 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes.
8. Let the cake cool in the pan for a few minutes, then invert and let cool completely on a rack.



# Cocoa Rub

This spicy cocoa rub is excellent for steaks, chicken, thick chops, and spare ribs. You can also add it to chili and hearty, thick soups.



## Ingredients

- 1/4 cup sea salt
- 2 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon white sugar
- 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 3 tablespoons ground cumin
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 tablespoons ground black pepper

## Directions

Stir salt, cocoa powder, white sugar, brown sugar, garlic powder, onion powder, cumin, chili powder, and black pepper in a small bowl until combined. Store in an airtight container.

To use: rub 2 to 3 teaspoons of spice mixture onto a serving of meat, and let stand at least 10 minutes before cooking.

# Chocolate, Coconut, Cherry Bites



## Ingredients

- 1 cup shredded unsweetened coconut
- 1 cup dried tart cherries
- 1/2 cup almonds
- 1/4 cup chia seeds
- 2 Tbsp natural cocoa powder
- 1/4 tsp. Ground cardamom
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 1/4 cup coconut oil
- 1 Tbsp dark chocolate chips or bar cut into pieces

## Preparation Instructions:

- 1.) Start by grinding the hard textured items first. In the above recipe that means grinding up the almonds, chia seeds and then chocolate chunks.
- 2.) Next add in the dry ingredients such as the cocoa powder, coconut and cardamom.
- 3.) After that is all ground together add in the cherries to the mixture. This will cause it to start to stick together.
- 4.) Next add in the coconut oil and maple syrup and grind until it starts to clump together in the food processor. The clumping together is a good clue that your ratios are going to work and it will easily roll into balls.
- 5.) When all ground and sticky, take small amounts and roll into balls between your hands. If you like, you can roll the balls in more coconut, cocoa powder or chopped nuts. Use your imagination and your taste buds!
- 6.) Store these in the fridge to solidify for at least 1/2 hour and then enjoy.

### Customize Your Treats!

The basic idea here is that you grind up all of your dry ingredients and then add in the sticky or wet ones to bind it all together. Then simply form into tasty, bite-sized balls of deliciousness. If you make substitutions you may need to adjust the ratios just a touch to get all to stick together and hold its form. It's really as easy as that so have fun with making these as sweet or salty or spicy as you'd like.