

7 Reasons Not to Give Up Chocolate in 2008

By Lucy Nixon, Fit Fare - Like many other people, perhaps you're planning some New Years resolutions? Here are a few reasons why 'giving up chocolate' should NOT be on your list, even if you do want to lose some weight ...

Chocolate is an anti-depressant

Serotonin, endorphins and phenylethylamine are all lurking in your chocolate bar, and these are mood-enhancers as well as alleviating anxiety. Chocolate is good for your heart - and your blood pressure

Chocolate contains flavonoids and other anti-oxidants, which help maintain a healthy heart, keep your blood circulation working well, and reduce the blood clotting which can cause heart attacks and strokes.

Chocolate helps you concentrate

Chocolate contains a small amount of caffeine, but also theobromine and phenylethylamine, which are also stimulants. These increase the activity of neurotransmitters in the brain which control our ability to pay attention and stay alert.

Chocolate soothes your cough

One of the stimulants in chocolate, theobromine, is a third more effective at reducing persistent coughs than codeine, according to researchers at Imperial College London.

Chocolate is good for your skin

German researchers have found that women who drank flavinoid-enriched cocoa had better skin after three months … and all those anti-oxidants have to help, don't they?

Chocolate can relieve your migraine

Yes, really - though not for all migraine sufferers.

Chocolate is an aphrodisiac

According to the Aztecs, anyway … I can't find any evidence for this, but there must be a reason why chocolate is part of the standard seduction ritual here in the West. Perhaps it's the power of marketing; perhaps it's psychological - or probably just the sensual pleasure of melting chocolate.

So what else has chocolate got going for it?

- A wide range of vitamins and minerals: iron, fluorine, magnesium, copper, potassium, sodium, zinc, phenols and vitamins A, B1, C D and E
- and - perhaps most importantly - it tastes good!

Note, though, that for all these, it is serious dark chocolate that has the real goodness in - not milk chocolate nor white chocolate. And, of course, too much won't be good for you. So choose a brand of dark chocolate with a high percentage of cocoa solids in - and enjoy a small square every day. The good news is that you only need a tiny amount of this kind of dark chocolate to satisfy your tastebuds, so you shouldn't be adding too much to your calorie-load.

Who needs New Year resolutions, anyway? Editor's Note:

This new dark chocolate trend is wonderful for dairy-free and vegan consumers, as the best dark chocolate brands (at least in our chocoholic opinions) are made without milk of any kind. If you have a severe milk allergy, and cross contamination is a concern, always check with the manufacturer on processes as some dark chocolates share equipment with their inferior milk chocolate relatives.

Here are a few of our favorite brands to date:

- Endangered Species - A fun assortment of dark chocolate bars and bites
- Scharffen Berger - Some products made on dedicated equipment, incredible for baking
- Enjoy Life Foods - Mini chocolate chips (allergen-safe company)
- Sjaak's - Organic, Fair Trade, and very gift-worthy
- Tropical Source - Dark Chocolate Chips that are 100% dairy-free and gluten-free

Of course, these are just from among the brands we have tried thus far. Many more are detailed in our product lists. Lucy Nixon runs a UK website, Free From, for people with Celiac Disease. The website focuses on gluten-free living and has a plethora of information, including a regularly updated blog. Photo Credit: Endangered Species