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Cocoa in cosmetics

Smelling the enticing scent of success, many brands have launched their own "chocolate" range. Whether a beauty treatment or sweet treat, cocoa continues to seduce our senses.

Cocoa: star of the cosmetic world
Cocoa's age-old properties
Cocoa's relaxing power

Just talking about it makes your senses buzz and tempts your tastebuds! Chocolate is a taste sensation - a sin - that many of us love to relish.

But you may not know that cocoa was originally used for body care. Aztecs knew how to make the most of chocolate's "raw material" for their beauty rituals.

So, how can you benefit from cocoa's cosmetic properties these days? No need to throw yourself into Charlie's chocolate river! To savour the benefits of cocoa, a few beauty treatments will do the trick.

Cocoa: star of the cosmetic world

Long blamed for adding pounds to our waistlines or causing acne, today chocolate

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waistlines or causing acne, today chocolate is taking its revenge. A veritable golden nugget for cosmetics, the cocoa bean boasts many properties. Anti-aging, anti-cellulite, relaxing... cocoa could have been the star if chocolate hadn't upstaged it.

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"Cocoa is the raw material for beauty treatments," explains Dr. Bulidon, nutritionist at **Royan thalassotherapy centre in the Gironde** region of France. "We talk of chocolate treatments (rather than cocoa) because chocolate's power on the imagination is much stronger, more enticing," he admits.

This opinion is shared by James Frerebau, co-founder of the brand **Sensation Chocolat**. "Chocolate is first and foremost about marketing, as chocolate itself doesn't bring anything to skin in terms of cosmetic properties," he explains. "It's the richness of the cocoa that is beneficial to our skin".

Cocoa's age-old properties

Let's take a quick look at these properties - that even 1,500 years BC - Aztecs were already using for their beauty rituals.

Cocoa is has good anti-aging properties. Extremely rich in polyphenols, "it contains 50 times more than grape seeds, which are already considered as a major heavyweight in the polyphenol world," explains James Frerebau.

Dr. Bulidon continues, "Cocoa is a highly powerful antioxidant against free radicals and therefore has an indirect effect on cellular aging".

In addition to slowing down the appearance of the first signs of aging, cocoa may also have an effect on our figure and especially on cellulite. "Caffeine is found within the cocoa bean shell which tones skin tissues and slows down the effects of distending skin ", explains Frerebau.

More than a simple marketing ploy, chocolate (read cocoa) treatments are winning growing success with their anti-aging and anti-cellulite properties, not to mention their relaxing and delicious qualities.

Cocoa's relaxing power

Cocoa contains serotonin and endorphins which have a soothing effect "beneficial against stress", explains Dr. Bulidon. Not forgetting "magnesium and vitamin B1 which equally have this soothing effect". Who has never felt that immense pleasure and feeling of relaxation after biting into a square of chocolate? Well, imagine the pleasure of slipping into a cocoa wrap smelling of sweet, delicious chocolate...

Applying a chocolate face mask, using a chocolate scrub or wrap apparently enhances our beauty but also plays a role in our wellbeing. According to James Frerebau however, "cocoa butter has to be one of the three main ingredients, otherwise it's not worth it... I advise women to buy natural skincare products, not necessarily organic. If you pay attention to avoiding preservatives such as methylparabens and propylparabens, buying organic is not a necessity".

And as for allergy risks or acne, Dr. Bulidon and James Frerebau are unanimous: "Cocoa has no allergy risks, even when applied to skin. And no study has confirmed the role of chocolate in the emergence of acne," explains nutritionist Dr. Bulidon.

Don't be mistaken however, "While chocolate-based skincare has an undeniable effect on our pleasure and relaxation levels and provides a moment of enjoyment and tranquillity, these beauty products are not as effective (for skin beauty) as a piece of real chocolate". So doctor, what's the daily chocolate dose to keep good-humoured, have beautiful skin and make the most of cocoa's properties? "30 grams of dark chocolate a day", assures Dr. Bulidon.

Don't resist temptation any longer!

Many spas and beauty treatment centres offer chocolate body wraps, massages and skin or hair masks, so do check them out the next time you are thinking of pampering yourself. In the meantime, here are some of our favourite cocoa beauty products:

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- Jo Malone **Blue Agava & Cocoa Cologne**

Many thanks to Dr. Bulidon, nutritionist at **Royan thalassotherapy centre** and James Frerebau, co-founder of **Sensation Chocolat**

Jessica Xavier

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Cocoa in natural skincare

1 year ago • Lorraine Dallmeier • Plant Butter • Skincare Science • ♥ 0

Happy Easter! As today is our modern day for gorging on chocolate or cocoa in all its various forms, I wanted to write about the uses of cocoa in natural skincare.

HELLO! I'M LORRAINE

I'm a Botanical Skincare Scientist and I run Herb & Hedgerow, a blog for people who love and make natural, botanical skincare. I write articles about the science of natural cosmetics.

BEAUTYCRAFT APP

Chocolate as Cash

The cocoa or cacao tree (*Theobroma cacao*) is a small tree, native to South America but now cultivated all over the world – mainly in West African countries. The seeds, contained within the tree's large cacao pods, are used to make cocoa powder or chocolate. Cacao pods weigh about half a kilo and contain up to 60 seeds which are used to make the chocolate we love eating so much. Each seed also contain 40-50% cocoa butter, a wonderful botanical plant fat.

We know that cocoa has been cultivated for well over 4,000 years and that it has long had various culinary, medicinal and ceremonial purposes. The Aztecs also ground up cocoa powder to add to their tobacco in order to smoke it. As a certified chocoholic, I can certainly appreciate the fact that cacao beans also formed part of a major currency system in the Aztec Empire (although I'd probably struggle not to eat my cash reserves if this was implemented nowadays).

Cocoa Butter in Natural Skincare

If you like using natural skincare products, you will have undoubtedly seen cocoa butter in some of the products you've bought. In its basic form it is sold as a yellowy hard butter which has a delicious chocolate scent. Cocoa butter is solid at room temperature (in our colder climates!) but liquifies around body temperature so it melts when it comes into contact with our skin. This rich plant butter is highly moisturising and hydrating because of this melting point which is why it is perfect for use in soaps, lip balms and body butters.

Cocoa butter is also very high in antioxidants including Vitamin E, which provide fantastic anti-ageing properties that fight the activity of free radicals on your skin and help to keep your skin looking supple and young. The antioxidants provide an added bonus by preventing cocoa butter from going rancid quickly which means it has a lovely long shelf life (2-5 years) when stored in its basic form.

Some proponents of cocoa butter claim that it can prevent or get rid of stretch marks, but a large-scale clinical study was undertaken in 2008 which demonstrated that this is unfortunately not the

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ADVERTS

fig of stretch marks, but a large-scale clinical study was undertaken in 2008 which demonstrated that this is unfortunately not the case (Osman *et al.*, 2008). So whilst cocoa butter will provide great moisturising properties if used during pregnancy, don't believe everything you read on the internet!

Caffeine for Cellulite

Cocoa butter isn't the only brilliant product yielded by the cacao pod. Other cocoa solids (such as cocoa powder) are also extracted from the cocoa bean and contain slightly different compounds which in turn provide different skincare benefits. Cocoa powder contains lots of minerals including calcium, potassium and zinc. Most importantly though, cocoa solids contain high levels of caffeine and theobromine which are only present in trace amounts in cocoa butter.

Caffeine and theobromine have similar properties and are brilliant in skincare. These compounds are able to break down fats and can have draining properties on fatty cells which allows them to be used for skin firming. Caffeine and theobromine are often used to to tighten the skin and reduce puffiness. All of these skincare properties mean that cocoa solids can be used to target cellulite when applied to your skin.

Cacao is also fabulous to eat and drink! A study done in 2006 found that women who drank cocoa which was high in flavonoids had thicker, denser and better hydrated skin at the end of the study. Their skin was also more tolerant to UV sunlight exposure (Heinrich *et al.*, 2006). This doesn't mean you need to eat or drink buckets of chocolate (tempting as that may seem…) given how much sugar is added to confectionery in the shops, but just be safe in the knowledge that one of your favourite foods can have beneficial effects on your skin.

References and Further Reading

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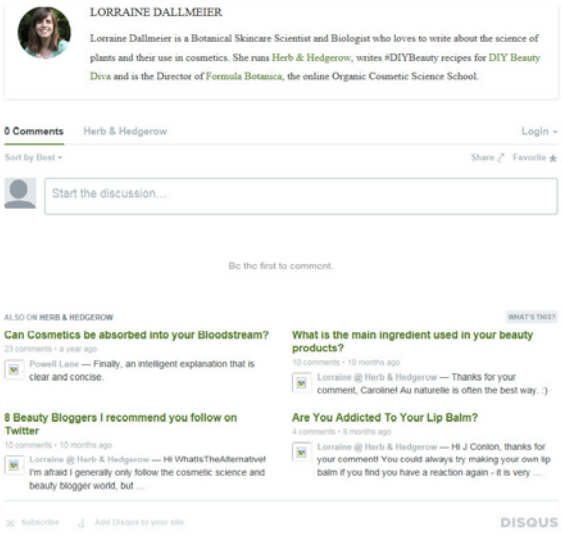

LORRAINE DALLMEIER

Lorraine Dallmeier is a Botanical Skincare Scientist and Biologist who loves to write about the science of plants and their use in cosmetics. She runs Herb & Hedgerow, writes #DIYBeauty recipes for DIY Beauty Diva and is the Director of Formula Botanica, the online Organic Cosmetic Science School.

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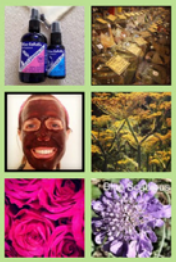

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SENSATION chocolat® PARIS

Beauty and Cocoa

Cocoa and the taste of beauty

The Cacao tree originated in the foothills of the Andes in the Amazon and Orinoco basins of South America. It was introduced into Central America by the **ancient Mayas**, and cultivated in Mexico by the Toltecs and later by the Aztecs. Cacao trees grow in a very limited geographical zone, of approximately 10 degrees to the north and south of the Equator.

Cocoa butter is derived from cacao beans: fruit of the cacao tree. It is a stable fat whose natural antioxidants are good for the skin. The moisturizing abilities of cocoa butter are frequently recommended for prevention of stretch marks in pregnant women, treatment of chapped skin and lips, and as a daily moisturizer to prevent dry, itchy skin. It does however, promote elasticity in the skin and will aid in the healing of chapped skin if it is used regularly. Cocoa Butter contains a kaleidoscope of vitamins, minerals and natural mood-boosters.

Wellbeing comes from the senses pleasures

Sensation Chocolat Paris chose to use Cocoa butter in exclusive

formulas where its benefits are at their best. It nourishes, hydrates, protects. It brings magnesium, iron, A, B1, B2, D & E vitamins. It's rich in **antioxydant** polyphenols and astringent tannins and actives. The theobromine of cacao has a thermogenetic activity, it redensifies the skin. Finally, its phytosterols have anti-age virtues.

Designed to **satisfy all chocolate cravings** without the calories, Sensation Chocolat Paris® introduces to the cosmetic market new products with it's never-seen-before application pleasure : tantalizing textures, irresistible scents, and most of all, glowing and antioxidant action for surprisingly unique sensations.

Naturally good

In 2008, Sensation Chocolat Paris decided to change the whole range's formulation of its professional and retail ranges and **remove paraben** and phenoxyethanol. The brand also claims that none of its raw material or finished products are tested on animals.

Beauty & cocoa

Cocoa Butter contains a kaleidoscope of vitamins, minerals and natural mood-boosters. It nourishes, hydrates and protects the skin.

Discover our products

Sensation Chocolat Paris offers 8 professional care treatments and 24 retail products for unique moments.

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Relaxed and enveloped in sweet scents of chocolate, experience the incredible sensation of skin comfort and glowing complexion.

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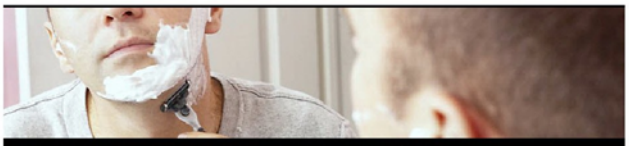
A cosmetic scientist's beauty science blog where he shares his news and views on beauty products and the science behind them



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