Chocolate has been regarded as a special treat for ages. Explore the Museum’s art from the Americas to discover different ways this delicious ingredient has been enjoyed. Start by traveling to Ancient Mesoamerica in Gallery LG32 in the Art of the Americas Wing.

Cylinder vases (Gallery LG32) > Art of the Ancient Americas

In Mexico, ancient “chocolate” drinks were made from roasted cacao (ka-kow) beans mixed with other ingredients, particularly water, corn, vanilla, and chili peppers. Cacao trees were difficult to grow, so their beans were very valuable.

Search for cylinder vases in the Ancient Mesoamerica Gallery (LG32 on your map). These vases were used to serve and drink cacao beverages. The images on these vases portray rulers and royal courts of the ancient Maya, and the hieroglyphic texts around their rims tell us what kind of chocolate drink each vase held. Look closely at the pictures and texts on the vases.

> How many cylinder vases can you and your Museum buddies count in this gallery (LG32)?
> Why do you think there are so many? Discuss your ideas.
> Look all around the vases. What images do you see?

To learn more about these ancient vases, visit the interactive table nearby. View all sides of some vases, discover Maya rulers, and learn what the texts say.

> In the space provided, design your own!
Chocolate pot (Gallery LG27) > Art of the Colonial Americas

Chocolate has been popular in North and South America. In early Colonial times, only adults drank hot cocoa because it gave children too much energy. People bought only the finest and most elaborately designed silver vessels to serve and drink chocolate because it was such a special drink. Find this Boston-made chocolate pot (right) in the Early Baroque Gallery (LG27 on the map) in the Art of the Americas Wing. Look closely.

> What details make this silver pot special?

> Why don’t the silver chocolate pots in this gallery have silver handles? Imagine holding it. Where would you place your thumb?

> How do you serve hot chocolate at home? How is this pot similar or different?

Chocolate cup (jícara) (Gallery 135)

Travel up to the Colonial Latin America Gallery (135 on the map) to find this cup (left). This jícara, or chocolate cup, was made in South America. It is made of a finely carved coconut shell with a silver handle and claw feet.

> How does it remind you of chocolate? Look at other examples nearby.

> How is this cup different from the ancient Maya vases?

After your visit MAKE YOUR OWN

Redraw the sketches from your Museum visit on a colorful piece of paper. Then, roll it into the shape of a cylinder vase, like the Ancient American examples. Overlap and glue the edges.

RECIPE

MEXICAN HOT CHOCOLATE

1 bar Mexican drinking chocolate
1 cup water
1 tsp ground chili pepper

Place bar and water in pan over low heat. Slowly melt the chocolate and stir until blended. Add chili pepper and pour. ¡Disfrute!

NEW ENGLAND HOT CHOCOLATE

2 tbsp sugar
3 tsp cocoa
1 cup milk
1/4 tsp vanilla extract

Mix sugar and cocoa in a large mug. Heat milk in a pan over low heat until hot. Gradually stir milk into cocoa mixture. Add vanilla extract. Enjoy!