Journey of the Bar of Chocolate by John Malam

Pods filled with beans

Cocoa pods grow on cocoa trees. The pods grow from the tree trunks and the main branches. Each tree makes 20 – 30 big pods a year. A fully-grown cocoa pod can be as big as a pineapple. It takes about five months for the pods to fully grow. There are 50 to 60 seeds inside each cocoa pod. These are the cocoa beans. They are tucked inside a layer of white pulp. The pulp looks like cotton wool.

Harvesting the pods

In West Africa, farmers harvest cocoa pods between October and January every year. They cut them off or knock them down with sticks. They take the pods back to their farms and split them open.

The farmers scoop the beans and pulp out by hand. They pile it into big heaps. They cover the heaps with banana leaves and leave them in the sun. This starts to give the beans their chocolate flavour.

Drying in the sun

The pulp turns to liquid in the heaps. It drains away after about a week. Only the beans are left. Farmers spread the beans over mats or tables.

The farmers turn the beans over and over every day. This is to make sure they dry right through. It takes about a week for the beans to dry out. They shrink and become very hard.

Roasting the beans

Cargo ships take the cocoa beans to countries around the world. When they arrive, the ships are unloaded. The beans are taken to chocolate factories. The beans are cleaned at the chocolate factory. Then they are roasted in a very hot oven. Roasting brings out more of the chocolate taste in the beans.

Removing the shells

Rollers crush the roasted beans. Rolling cracks open the hard shells of the beans. The pieces of bean inside the shells are called nibs. A blast of air blows away the broken

shells and leaves the nibs behind. Gardeners buy the bits of broken shell! They put it on top of soil so that the soil does not dry out.

Cocoa mass

The cocoa nibs are ground into a sticky paste called cocoa mass. Cocoa mass has cocoa butter and specks of cocoa in it. The cocoa mass is pressed to separate the cocoa butter and the cocoa. Pressing forces, the cocoa butter out of the cocoa mass. The cocoa is poured into moulds. Then it is left to go hard and become blocks of solid cocoa.

Becoming milk chocolate

The blocks of solid cocoa are heated up. The cocoa melts and becomes a thick, brown liquid. It looks like lovely chocolate, but pure cocoa has a very, very bitter taste. Sugar is added to the cocoa to make it taste sweet. Cocoa, milk, cocoa butter, and sugar are the ingredients in milk chocolate.

Bars of chocolate

Bars of chocolate are made in moulds. A machine pours the warm, runny chocolate into them. This happens very quickly. Hundreds of moulds are filled every minute of the day. The filled moulds are put into a big fridge. The chocolate cools down. When the chocolate is hard, the moulds are emptied. The bars of chocolate come out of the moulds.

Questions

1. How many pods are grown on a tree each year?

2. How many seeds are inside a cocoa pod?

3. What months are the cocoa pods harvested between?

4. What do gardeners do with the broken bits of shell?

5. How do cocoa beans get transported around the world?

6. When the chocolate is hard, what happens to the moulds?