

Dark Gold: The Lifeblood of Early Modern Europe

Intro: Welcome to Hampshire HistBites. Join us as we delve into the past and go on a journey to discover some of the county's best and occasionally unknown history. We'll be speaking to experts as well as enthusiasts, asking them to reveal some of our hidden heritage, as well as share with you a few fascinating untold stories.

Holly: Hello there! Today we have our final episode on chocolate in early modern England. I'm Holly Marsden, a PhD researcher at the Uni of Winchester and Historic Royal Palaces, and I'm researching Queen Mary II. I'm here with Andy Silen-McMillin. Andy is also completing her PhD at the University of Winchester. She looks at early modern Queens, specifically focusing on the Queen's lands of Anna of Denmark. And here, I just want to include a warning that there might be mentions of enslavement and violence throughout this podcast.

So hello, Andy.

Andy: Hello.

Holly: So just to recap on our previous two episodes. Had other European countries started importing and consuming cocoa before it made its way into England?

Andy: Yes, actually it had a quite active uptake in the continent, primarily Spain, and a lot of that has to do with who was sending "active explorers" as we call them, or even colonizing some of the areas that chocolate did come from during the period that it started becoming quite popular in Europe, which is 16th, 17th centuries.

So chocolate, which we could say is the broad name for everything, you know, cocoa, chocolate desserts, blah, blah, blah. Cocoa bean actually was what they found first and it was made and prepared in a drink and actually the explorer, Conquistador Cortez, was introduced to it at a banquet held by Montezuma, which is, everybody knows, he's the Aztec king, very famous, you know, you hear of Montezuma's revenge and this and that, but, the funny thing is he pretty much discovered it by accident. Montezuma thought he was a deity. So according to South American cultures that's who was entitled to drink a cup of chocolate, so that's how he got introduced to it.

At that point in time, chocolate, due to the attributes of the bean, had different uses. It was medicinal and they used it even like an aphrodisiac. They knew about these properties so that was one of the reasons why they reserved it. And then to some cultures in South America it was deemed as a magical type of bean, but their value was quite high. Some of my records show that one bean was equal to a tamale, and this is according to 16th century Aztec documentation, and a hundred beans was equal to a turkey. So you kind of give you an idea of how valuable they were. They also traded them like they were currency. So, Cortez with his knowledge, takes this back to Spain and they added sugar into it later, which gave it a more sweet taste. Chocolate without sweetening has a very bitter type taste and it's an acquired thing. So unless you're brought up on it, which a lot of South American cultures are, Mexican hot chocolate is very different from normal, American chocolate. They put nutmeg, they put cinnamon in it, they will put milk in it, but it's a different taste. So if you're not raised on it, most people don't like it. So sugar was added much later to suit the population and what they like, so, and that helped really boost it across the world.

Holly: So the Europeans gained access to chocolate through Spain. Can you give us just a quick overview of the links between chocolate and colonialism, just to recap?

Andy: The biggest thing would be the Conquistadores. What were they doing in South America? They were exploring, they were starting to colonize. They were going into - one was gold, that was a biggest drive. The other one was what can we find here that we can take home? And we know more as time goes on with Columbus Spain was also very, very big on spreading Catholicism. So when they would go places, they would also bring a monk or religious person with them to help spread Christianity because they were a Catholic country. That was part of the rationale as to why they were exploring. I'm not a Spanish historian, but I would not be surprised if a lot of their funding came from the backing of the church. It was not only the monarchs that backed them, they got a lot of money from the church. The top three people, off the top of my head, who I think explored the world in the 17th, 16th century Columbus, Cortez, Drake, even though he was English, he was contracted by Spain to explore.

One of the biggest documents, I would say probably important, that I found while on this little discovery trip of chocolate and its introduction to England was, in 1688 there is an Act for Charging and Collecting the Duties Upon Coffee, Tea and Chocolate at the Customs House. And basically, a snapshot of what was getting imported at the time and why they started taxing it. And it gives you an idea of how expensive it was and it compares it to, there's a couple other things in here, but they break down how coffee is imported, the cocoa nuts, and tea. So, briefly coffee was imported at a price of £5, 12 shillings. And then cocoa nuts, and this is cocoa nuts as in cocoa beans, they were imported for £8 and 8 shillings. Tea was 5 shillings and for every pound of chocolate, it was 8 pennies. So, it kind of gives you an idea of how much each thing was worth. Also in this document, they talk about nutmeg and then there's another one called Two Thirds of Duty Repaid on Expectations. I mean, it's very detailed in how they collected the funds, where they went, what they were for, and it gives you an idea of where they were coming from and who was bringing them in. So yeah, it's very interesting.

Holly: Definitely. And so there was kind of, I guess, a self-awareness amongst people in the country and people in power that chocolate was the new rage. So why do you think that it needed to be taxed? What persuaded the monarchs to tax chocolate?

Andy: The Crown has a lovely history of not getting as much money from places as it wants. I'm more familiar with Tudor history than Mary II, but it obviously was to keep the money flowing. They needed to make money at the end of the day. So people are realizing, oh, I can make a buck. And then we have this rising middle-class, who's also wanting to make money, but then we also have the Crown that's like, well, we need to make money too. So what's one of the easiest way for them to make money? Tax. They exported wool still, but they didn't import at that point in time something that was going to get eaten up, like buttons. I mean tacking it on with tea is probably the smartest thing for them to do.

Holly: Yeah. And I guess making chocolate legislated restricts who can have chocolate. It plays into the idea that it was a product only for the rich. So have you found any evidence of how it was used and who it was consumed by?

Andy: Yes. I actually found a couple of really great sources. One, it's called Shakespeare's Folgers History, and it goes through all kinds of history on coffee, on chocolate, and then they have a really, really nice tight library, that's nothing but manuscripts. For example, there's about five, six books that we know of today that have kind of like advertising, but it's not advertising, but it's promoting the use of chocolate and how to make your hot chocolate drink, with recipes. It was one of the earliest ones I found.

I found a lot of drink recipes, but I, I think I found one where they were actually were cooking, but they made it like a cream. So they weren't quite there, early 17, I would say 16th century where this, they were actually putting it in cakes yet. But it was just very interesting to see that, that information that they did have was on drinking and that was basically straightforward.

Holly: And just a note for the listeners, references and links to some of these recipes in the episode notes as well like the images discussed in other episodes that we've done.

Andy: So one of the books, and then this is also gives you an idea of what they were calling chocolate in Europe was in William Hughes book, which was dated 1672. Interestingly, he was a pirate and a botanist. He went and he explored, but he was also a plant nut so in his little book, *The American Physitian*, he refers to chocolate as 'American nectar'. And the tree it came from was the cacao-nut-tree, that contained a recipe on making a compilation, a cup of chocolate. So I have that listed in my notes, with the recipe, which is quite interesting.

There's another one I found from 1700, and this was like I said, one of the only recipes I found where it wasn't really a drink, but it was like a cream, where they took a pint of cream, they boil it. And then here, they actually said to put a big spoon of chocolate, let it boil. Then while stirring, you put in a yolk of egg, which is interesting, let it stand and then milk, they ask for milk and the chocolate, and then it kind of disappears. It goes to another page, but that page was not included, but so this one, they, you can tell they're adding egg, which is different than the other ones, but there's no sugar, interestingly enough, at all, just an egg.

Holly: The main difference between how we consume chocolate today, to how it was consumed in the 17th century is that it wasn't eaten.

Andy: And then, about 1777, 1779 there's another recipe, which is a bit, a little bit difficult for me to read, exactly, but they added vanilla this time. So now they're starting to alter the taste of it. But it gives the measurements and everything in there.

Holly: And just for the podcast listeners, where can you find this kind of information?

Andy: I have found a lot of this information on a couple of places. One was, it's called Folger EDU, and it's the world's largest Shakespeare collection. That's what the database library is for all the manuscripts. And most can click on them and you can get access to. And then there was another site, the Discovery of Chocolate, and that was all digital collections for the classroom.

Holly: Great. Just in case anyone wants to try and make any of these recipes. That egg one sounds very interesting.

Andy: I actually found a recipe dated 1631 for Spanish hot chocolate. And this one actually, the Spanish have vanilla and they have some chocolate but it's to taste. They're not just adding the sugar in there to add the sugar, they're adding it for taste. And then there's a chocolate spice one, and it says you can add it to any chocolate recipe where they take nutmeg and annatto, which I'm not sure what that is, and then cinnamon and then cayenne pepper.

Holly: Wow.

Andy: Cloves, aniseed. So, yeah. And that was one thing that was interesting, in a lot of the south American recipes, they put chilli. Not necessarily a spicy chilli, but they do put chilli spice in their

chocolate. Today even chocolate candies down there have chilli on them. So yeah, it's a very different palate, regionally, compared to Europe. It's one of the biggest things I noticed living here and living back home is the sweet range, and even the savoury range is completely opposite.

Holly: What other things, other food stuffs, have been through a similar journey as chocolate?

Andy: I know the sweet potato went on an interesting journey. And also corn, but they call it maize over here. That was also a by-product of exploration and colonization. So that was one and apparently the potato, just the generic potato did not come from England, it originated in the Americas.

Holly: So obviously a lot of the importation of these goods came from the Crown.

Andy: Yes.

Holly: Commissioning people to go and find them and bring them back. What do you think that meant? What kind of statement was the Crown making in distributing food stuffs like this and distributing cocoa amongst the elite in England?

Andy: I want to say the Crown was kind of making a name for themselves in a way and they were also trying to show that they could compete with these merchants that had arisen, up through, you know, social class that they too could have a name in trade. And then they were also competing on a global scale. They had Spain, they had France, everybody at that point in time was going all different places to gather things up and bring it back, make money, and then keep expanding their empires. So this period that we're looking at, history-wise, it's on that brink of massive expansion of countries and colonization because they were discovering things that they didn't have at home and they would bring home and it'd be like, wow, this is really cool. So they were all in a bit of a global contest as to who was going to beat the person to the next thing.

Holly: So it was a political move?

Andy: A lot of it was very political. It's also a source of power for the monarchies that were running the countries as well. The more they traded, the more money they gained, the more powerful they will be, the more diplomatic power they gained. So another big thing that we see during the early modern period is these countries are gaining land, trade routes, money, and they're getting powerful. And of course at the same time, they're building up their armies as well. So yeah, it's a very, very global enterprise happening here, in, kind of in its infancy, but it's getting there.

Holly: Definitely. And does this research that you've done for this project on chocolate, does it connect to your PhD research in any way?

Andy: There's a little bit here and there. There wasn't very much account book, recipe, culinary fun in it. But I am finding with Anna's account books, there's a lot of detail in them and there's a lot of information on where money comes from, especially in her dowry settlements and some of the grants she's given. So that'll be interesting. I already know, offhand, sugar was one of the things she was able to collect revenue on, barley, even from Scotland was one, but it'll be interesting to look at her later account books to see if chocolate or any of these other items that we've talked about show up, as a something she can have a percentage of the tax to have for her income while she was queen.

Holly: Definitely. And on a final note, will you be trying any of these recipes for yourself?

Andy: I think I will try the Spanish one to see how close it is to Mexican hot chocolate. You know, I mean, I can, go make a phone call and someone can send me Mexican chocolate, but I want to try the Spanish one just to see how different it is.

Holly: Yeah. Well, thank you so much for coming and talking with me. And thanks to our listeners for listening to this special podcast series on chocolate in early modern England. We thank all of our contributors and hope you all learned a lot about one of the nation's favourite sweet treats. So thank you, Andy

Andy: You're most welcome.

Outro: We hope you enjoyed listening to today's episode. If you would like to find out a little bit more about what we've been talking about, then please visit the website, www.winchesterheritageopendays.org, or click on Hampshire HistBites, and there you'll find today's show notes as well as some links to more information.
Thank you.