



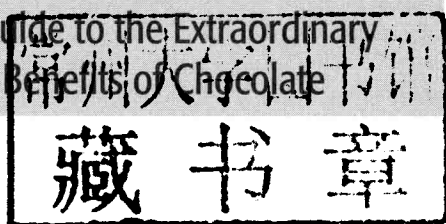
# *The Chocolate Therapist*

A User's Guide to  
the Extraordinary Health Benefits  
of Chocolate

Julie Pech

# The *Chocolate* Therapist™

A User's Guide to the Extraordinary  
Health Benefits of Chocolate



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There are two types of people in the world—those who love chocolate and those who will soon. Perhaps this is why philosophers originally coined the phrase “we are all one.” Once you understand the concept, life becomes considerably easier.

I dedicate this book to you: the chocolate lovers of the world.

*Warning: Do not attempt to read this book  
without a dark chocolate bar in hand.*

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I'm finally beginning to understand Lawrence Kushner's magical words "Everyone carries with them at least one piece to someone else's puzzle." God bless each of you.

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# Introduction

A FEW SHORT DECADES AGO smoking was harmless and cool, drinking a glass of red wine a day was the sign of a problem drinker, and eating bread and carbohydrates was the best way to lose weight. Even chocolate was considered bad for you. Fortunately, those days are behind us. We now know that smoking causes cancer, a daily glass of red wine is good for your heart, and one of the best ways to lose weight is by following a reduced-carbohydrate diet. Yet the most exciting news is that *chocolate* and *healthy* can finally be used in the same sentence. The Age of Chocolate has arrived.

With research results still coming in, many people are wondering how chocolate, a food on the “diet-don’t” list for years, can be healthy. Yet surprisingly, chocolate has a variety of benefits for the body, such as mood-lifting neurotransmitters and powerful antioxidants. Chocolate also contains a healthy supply of vitamins and minerals and even stimulates the brain into releasing endorphins. In fact, once you’ve finished reading this book, you’ll discover that it’s possible to eat a little chocolate every day, guilt-free *and* without gaining weight. Admittedly, this statement seems too good to be true. I doubted it myself until a simple event triggered a full-scale investigation.

While deleting a collection of e-mail ads for bedroom stimulants, weight-loss pills, and guaranteed depression cures, I came across a single intriguing message titled “Why Chocolate Is Good for You.” When I opened it, I discovered the following interesting facts: (1) Chocolate has more antioxidants by weight than red wine. (2) Chocolate releases endorphins in the brain that have been proved to uplift moods and reduce the sensation of pain. (3) Chocolate contains more than four hundred flavor compounds and plant chemicals, many of which benefit the body in some way.

The list went on, and the news got better with every sentence. As I surveyed my computer screen more closely, I realized that the e-mail for chocolate had arrived directly between the advertisements of our most pressing health issues. Having reviewed the informative essentials, I pondered, Wouldn’t it be convenient if chocolate could solve our health problems?

All of this happened a few years ago, back when I had a career but had always longed to chase my capricious creative heart. I’d entertained the idea of writing a book for quite some time, and I wanted to write on a subject I felt passionate about. I’d spent most of my life studying nutrition in one form or another. I was a competitive athlete in my youth, which required paying constant attention to a diet that would help me perform at my personal best. My father

was a nutritionist; I studied nutrition in college and spent much of my reading time poring over the latest diet books.

In fact, at any given time during my life, you'd more likely find me reading a diet or nutrition book as opposed to the latest best seller. I tried many of the diets, sometimes to lose weight and other times just to see how they affected the body. In what might have been a bit of a contradiction, a consuming passion for chocolate was never more than a wrapper away. The moment I read the "Why Chocolate Is Good for You" e-mail I knew my nutritional ship had come in. I sold my small corporate apparel company and set about researching how the loves of my life—nutrition and chocolate—intersected.

Yet when I began in 2004, high-quality research on chocolate was difficult to come by. Most of the chocolate-for-health news still consisted of rumors, and people laughed at the idea that they could actually have chocolate along with their daily glass of red wine. I didn't have a single contact in the chocolate industry before I began, but I wasn't about to let this minor detail stand in my way. I started firing off e-mails to anyone who looked like he or she might be able to help.

Within a few weeks the most amazing events occurred. I made connection after unexpected connection. People I'd never met referred me to universities, researchers, and scientists who were studying chocolate. Over time, I ended up with stacks of research that wasn't yet available to the public. So many coincidental events occurred time and again that I knew I was on the right path. Apparently, the "leap of faith" concept was the key—I had to take action before I could find who was out there to help. At parties the mere mention of the word *chocolate* prompted a swirl of highly intriguing conversations. Whenever I purchased stacks of chocolate bars at the checkout stand, curious strangers in line poured forth elixirlike tales of chocolate. Numerous friends leaped in with personal stories about how they used chocolate to

self-medicate. Information on the health benefits of chocolate came my way, day after day. And, of course, everyone I talked to wanted to hear the facts so that they could embrace the concept of healthy chocolate enjoyment.

I decided to investigate other foods commonly added to chocolate bars as well, so my research expanded. I studied nuts, dried fruits and berries, flavored oils, and spices such as coffee, cinnamon, cayenne pepper, and mint. This new information revealed additional encouraging facts about food and health, all pointing to the obvious notion that eating real rather than processed foods has significant health benefits.

Some people may not define the chocolate bar as an unprocessed food. Yet once I'd considered the research, I discovered that it's possible to eat chocolate in a form that's quite close to the original cocoa bean. Because the cocoa bean is actually a fruit, eating chocolate provides many of the same benefits as eating fruit. The key is to eat the "right" kind of chocolate, so I focused on this area as well.

Ultimately, I uncovered the intricate details about chocolate that you'll learn while reading this book—why darker is better, how to read the labels to get the best chocolate, where to find good-quality chocolate, exactly which components of chocolate benefit health, how the industry is changing, and why spending a little more at the grocery store means saving money at your doctor's office. *The Chocolate Therapist* is divided into easy-to-follow chapters so that you can quickly absorb the facts and move directly to the chocolate remedies:

- "The Condensed History of Chocolate": Unique and entertaining facts that you can discuss at any social gathering.
- "From Cacao Tree to Chocolate Bar": A summary of cacao trees and the production process from bean to bar.
- "Healthy Investigation": An overview of the extraordinary health benefits of chocolate.

- “Selecting the Proper Chocolate”: Learn how to choose the best chocolate for optimal health, how to read labels, what to look for, and what to avoid. Become an expert in your field.
- “Proper Chocolate Consumption”: Quickly acquire the tasting skills of a distinguished chocolate connoisseur.
- “Chocolate Remedies”: Exactly how and why chocolate can help alleviate an assortment of health issues.

After you finish the enticing chocolate center of the book, press on for even more entertainment in “Where Do You Hide Your Chocolate?” and “Chocolate and Wine Pairing” before you finish off with some delectable recipes. And there’s no need to stop researching once you’ve finished the book. More studies than ever before are currently being conducted, all of them devoted to discovering chocolate’s many hidden health benefits.

Remember Sir Francis Bacon’s visionary words “Knowledge is power,” a concept I can confirm as truth through personal experience. Who would have guessed that knowing so much about chocolate could lead to such an entertaining life? I have continuous projects in action, including a promising personal investigation: I’ve recommended to my children that they eat dark chocolate instead of other treats. As I hypothesized, they’re taking to the idea rather well.

As another project, whenever I give in to the dessert tray, I now opt for a dark chocolate selection. In the past I mulled over every possible dessert. Now I simply decide which *chocolate* delicacy to enjoy. In the event that there are more than two, it’s easy to convince someone else at the table to order one, while I select the other. Between the two of us, we’re able to maximize the research potential.







One



# The Condensed History of Chocolate

*T*HE HISTORY OF CHOCOLATE is ambiguous and full of mystery. Dates, places, and names conflict. Stories vary from one history book to the next. The people I met with to get to the bottom of the alleged facts seemed amused by my confusion. Apparently, if anyone genuinely believes that he or she understands the history of chocolate, that individual hasn't thoroughly researched the subject. It was true—the deeper I dug, the more controversy I found. Fortunately, I uncovered a moderately discernible path that I could count on.