

Compare hot cocoa and hot chocolate

Rich Hot Chocolate

This hot chocolate tastes rich enough to be dessert—forget the marshmallows. To vary the flavor, infuse the milk with orange zest or fresh mint leaves before adding the chocolate.

2½ cups whole milk
3 Tbs. granulated sugar
(chocolates vary in sugar level, so feel free to add another tablespoon if necessary)
Pinch table salt
¾ oz. bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped (about ¾ cup)

Classic Hot Cocoa

This is the hot cocoa from my childhood, chocolatey but not rich enough to spoil dinner. I think mini marshmallows are essential, but you can skip them if you wish.

¼ cup unsweetened natural cocoa powder
3 to 4 Tbs. granulated sugar
Pinch table salt
2½ cups whole milk
Mini marshmallows (optional), for garnish

Put the milk, sugar, and salt in a medium saucepan set over medium-high heat. Cook, whisking frequently, until the sugar is melted, about 2 minutes. Continue to cook until the milk nearly reaches a boil, stirring occasionally, about 2 more minutes. Turn off the heat and add the chopped chocolate to the pan. Whisk constantly until the chocolate is melted and the mixture is smooth.

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And, the fact is, the cocoa butter can make for a pleasantly firm cake, especially if the recipe contains at least 4 ounces of unsweetened chocolate—think of a rich Bundt cake with a dense, springy crumb. In brownies, cocoa yields chewy results, while chocolate gives a fudgy texture. Chocolate lovers can be snobby about brownies, but the fact is that cocoa powder makes for fabulously rich, chewy brownies. Brownies are chewy when they're high in sugar, fat, and eggs but low in flour. The last variable to their final texture is the nature of the fat used in the recipe—specifically how hard the fat is at the temperature the brownies are to be served. Butter is soft at room temperature, so brownies made with cocoa plus butter (or oil) have a noticeably soft, chewy texture. And the flavor is

2½ cups flour.) And the texture is moist because vegetable oil is liquid at room temperature (and even when cool), unlike butter and cocoa butter, which are solid. You can serve devil's food cake refrigerator-cold, and it will still be exceptionally tender. **Chocolate cake made with chocolate-late, on the other hand, is temperature-sensitive.** If you've ever been served a slice of cold chocolate cake that was dry and crumbly, it may well have been made with chocolate. Remember, cocoa butter is hard even at cool room temperature. The cake's flavor suffers, too, because the cocoa butter is what carries the chocolate flavor, and the colder it is, the longer it takes to melt on your tongue and release the flavor. This is not to say that cakes made with chocolate are unpleasant; you just need to remember to serve them

Here's an easy way to experience the difference between cocoa and chocolate. The first recipe, at right, uses cocoa powder (with milk) and it's plenty chocolatey (front cup). The second recipe is made with chocolate. The cocoa butter makes it taste richer, but the chocolate flavor is more muted at first.

