

Chocolate production over time

From the campfire to the computer.

Chocolate production has always started with the cocoa beans being roasted. The native inhabitants of Central America roasted them in clay vessels over an open fire. The Spanish already used iron pans. In the 19th century, the first mechanised roasting machines were then brought in, with the beans heated over a brazier in a receptacle shaped like a drum or sphere.

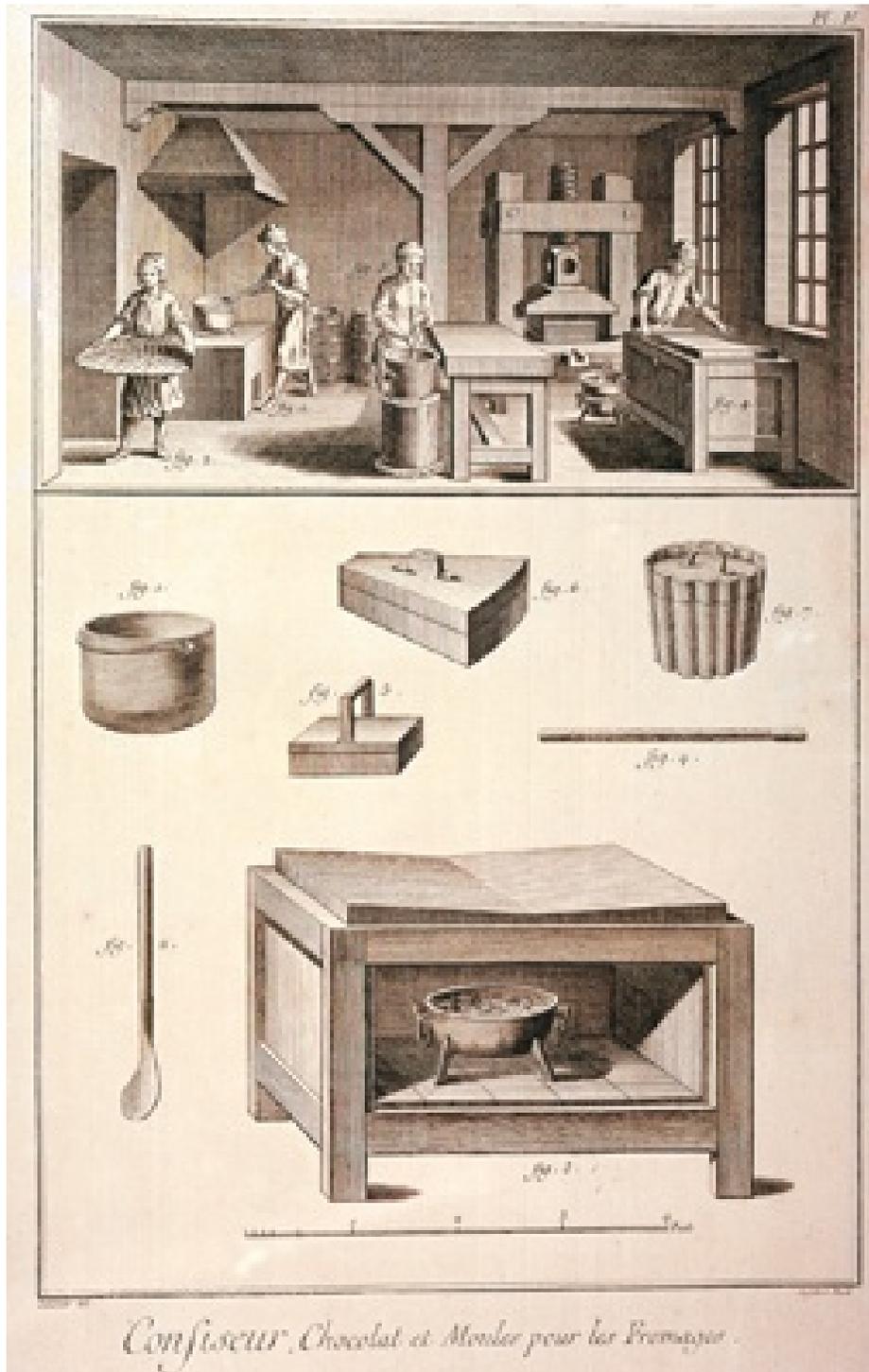
To grind the cocoa beans, the Mayas and Aztecs used the "metate", a shallow stone bowl. Placed diagonally over a fire, this was used to grind the cocoa beans into cocoa liquor using a stone roller. It was not until the middle of the 18th century that a structure was built with table legs, allowing the beans to be ground standing upright with a kind of rolling pin. This was followed by the long conche, developed in 1879 by Rodolphe Lindt and refined into the conche as we know it today.



The old "Metate".

During the Industrial Revolution, one invention came after another: Fry & Sons was the first company to operate their cocoa processing mills using a Watt steam engine. In 1826, Swiss chocolatier Philippe Suchard invented a chocolate paste mixer, or *mélangeur*.

In 1828, the Dutch chocolate maker Van Houten developed a process for pressing part of the cocoa butter out of the cocoa beans. Fry & Sons remixed this with the cocoa mass and sugar to create a particularly ductile, pourable chocolate mass.



Then came the moment that the first milk chocolate was produced: this was much improved by the addition of Henri Nestlé's powdered milk.

Today, most steps in the production of chocolate are fully automatic. Modern, computer-controlled conches produce better results in a shorter time. Computers monitor the entire manufacturing process, spotting and correcting the tiniest discrepancies, e.g. in the quantity of ingredients.