

WAY SURPRISING STUFF

● Did you know that cotton candy is more than one hundred years old?

For hundreds of years, cooks made spun sugar, a tedious affair, as toppings for small cakes and desserts. William J Morrison, a dentist, invented an electric machine to make candy floss. He called it fairy floss. His machine could make massive quantities of floss quickly.

He debuted his invention in 1904 at the St Louis World Fair, and it was an instant success. He sold 68,655 boxes of the stuff at \$0.25 a pop. Today, that would be \$500,000 worth of floss, factoring in inflation.

Today, cotton candy flavours include banana, raspberry, vanilla, watermelon, and chocolate. Artificial and natural flavors go into the creation of the flavors and colours.

● Where did chocolate originate?

The Mayans, in 500 BCE, made a chocolate drink from ground-up cocoa seeds, water, cornmeal, and chili peppers. Quite a different version from the hot chocolate that became a popular luxury item exclusive to the upper class and royalty. In the early 1500s, it was the Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés who brought cocoa beans and the chocolate drink-making tools to Europe. Served cold, it was quite bitter. Later, the court of King Charles V drank it hot and added sugar. For a hundred years, hot chocolate was a secret in Spain.

As it spread through Europe, in London Chocolate Houses, like our modern coffee shops were trendy. In the late 1700s, the president of the Royal College of Physicians, Hans Sloane, brought from Jamaica a recipe for mixing chocolate with milk, which made the drink more palatable. That is why we drink hot chocolate to this day.

● How do six-sided snowflakes form?

A snowflake begins to form when an extremely cold-water droplet freezes onto a pollen or dust particle in the sky. This creates an ice crystal. As the ice crystal falls to the ground, water vapor freezes onto the primary crystal, building new crystals to form the six arms of the snowflake. Long needle-like crystals form at -5°C and very flat plate-like crystals form at -15 degrees C.