

Maya Food

Task 1

Use the clues and pictures to help you work out the anagrams for the Maya foods.

Anagram	Answer
eynoh	
qshaus	
senab	
kutrye	
ocaca	
hilicl rppeeps	
rnco or ezami	
erde	

- A large animal hunted by the Maya for food.
- A protein-rich food often grown alongside corn.
- A small, spicy fruit which could be added to many dishes.
- A sweet, sticky food made by a buzzing insect.
- A wild or domesticated animal which provided meat and eggs.
- The main food in the Maya diet – used in a range of recipes.
- A small bean which was very precious and was used to make chocolate.
- A root vegetable whose seeds could be made into a nutritious paste.



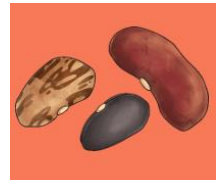
avocado



cassava



chilli peppers



beans



maize



papaya



pumpkins



turkey



cacao



honey



jicama



deer



squash



sweet potato



tomatoes

Did you know?

They would plant beans next to the maize so that the vines would wrap around the growing maize stalks.

The Maya people ate out of bowls made of pottery.

Amazing Maize

Maize (more commonly known as corn) was a very important crop, and formed up to 80% of the Maya diet. Farmers would plant maize wherever they could. To plant the maize, holes would be made in the soil with a sharp bladed, wooden digging stick called a dibble. The soil was very dry and if the May rains didn't come, a whole year's crop would be lost. For thousands of years, the Maya worshipped the maize god. They even believed that the first humans were made by the gods from maize dough! Because of this, when suffering from severe illness, they would eat nothing but maize.

The maize dough, *zucan*, could be mixed with water and boiled to make a loose porridge called *pozole*. *Pozole* would be eaten on special occasions. After the Spanish colonized Central America, the traditional ingredients of *pozole* changed and it became more like a soup or stew, with meat and vegetable added to the maize but it is still eaten today.

Stuffed dumplings, *tamales*, were made from balls of *zucan*, baked in a shallow dish.

It could be a hot drink, *atole*, which was the *zucan* mixed with water and sweetened with honey.

When fermented, the maize could be made into an alcoholic drink called *b'alche*, drunk at religious festivals. It was flavoured with tree bark.



pozole



tamales

Task 2:

Chocoholics



Cacao trees sprout cacao pods directly from their trunks. The pods are then opened to reveal the cacao beans inside.

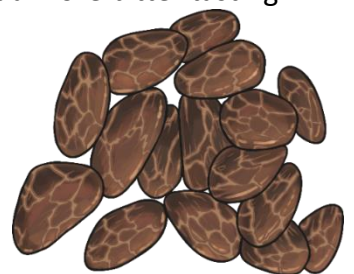
The Maya used these beans to make a chocolatey drink from as far back as the fourth century AD. However, it was not the sweet, chocolatey flavour we crave today, but a more bitter tasting version, often laced with chilli or vanilla and other spices.

The drink was enjoyed by the rich and noble members of society, and the cacao beans were highly valued.

They were even used as a form of currency later on in Maya history.

The Maya word for chocolate is *kakaw*.

The Maya used chocolate in religious ceremonies and they also mixed them with herbs to make medicines.



Answer these questions in your home learning books:

1. How do cacao beans grow?
2. Why do you think cacao was so important to the Maya people?





Task 3

Chocolate and corn were both very significant and precious foods in ancient Maya, but **which do you think was the most important?**

Cut and stick or write these statements into the table depending on whether they are related to **chocolate** or **corn**.

The Maya people believed that the first humans were made out of this.	The Mayan people believed that this plant was found in the mountain by gods.
This food could be made into a hot drink called <i>atole</i> , eaten like a porridge called <i>pozole</i> or made in tortillas.	The silky strands of this plant were used to make a tonic to help keep their kidneys and bladder healthy.
The food was often mixed with herbs and used with medicines.	The rich and noble members of society enjoyed this food made into a hot drink.
The beans of this plant was used as a form of currency (money).	This food was the main part of the Maya diet.

Corn	Chocolate
	

Use this information and do your own research to find out which food you think was the most important.

Describe your choice in as much detail as you can.

I think ... was the most important food for the Ancient Maya People because ...

Task 4: Have a go at making a Maya hot chocolate using this recipe:

Ancient Maya Hot Chocolate



Only the rich and noble members of Maya society drank this chocolately treat. Is your palate distinguished enough to appreciate its rich, wholesome flavour?

Ingredients (Makes 2 small servings)

- 3 tablespoons of instant hot chocolate powder
- 250ml of milk
- 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
- A pinch of chilli powder

Equipment

- Small jug
- Spoon (teaspoon and tablespoon)
- Pan for boiling milk



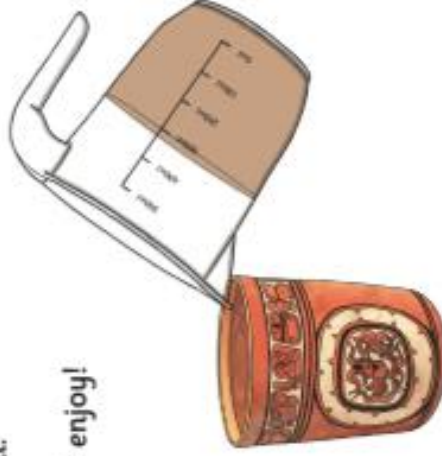
Step 1. Mix the cocoa, cinnamon and chilli together in a small jug.



Step 2. Heat the milk slowly in a small pan on the stove (or in a microwave) until it is bubbly and frothy.



Step 3. Pour the milk into the jug containing the cocoa and spices and stir well.



Step 4. Serve and enjoy!

Top Tip!

If you want to make your hot chocolate more authentic, then use cacao (dark chocolate) and pour it back and forth between two mugs to make it frothy. Depictions on vases show us that this is what the ancient Maya did!