

Do you like chocolate?

It's hard to find people who don't. Personally, I love to drink iced chocolate in the summer and hot chocolate with lots of whipped cream in the winter. Whenever I eat or drink chocolate it makes me very happy and gives me energy when I am tired and sleepy. My teacher at cram school sometimes gives me chocolate while I am studying, which is awesome.

Getting chocolate is not so easy because I don't have much money to buy chocolate all the time. I thought if I could make chocolate by myself from scratch I wouldn't have to go buy it. So, this summer I tried to make chocolate from cacao beans. I did the whole process from washing, roasting, peeling, pounding them into a powder, and finally making the chocolate sauce. The bitter cacao combined with the sugar and milk was delicious. But it took quite a lot of time and effort, and it was actually more expensive to buy cacao beans and make it myself than to buy high quality already made chocolate from the store.

This experience made me wonder why that was the case?

So, I started to do some research for the answer, and what I found was surprising and a little sad. Much of the cacao is grown, cultivated and processed in countries that have very poor economies, and the people that do the hard work, are paid very little. They often even use child labor which means that children are being forced to work so they can help their families make money instead of going to school and getting an education.

In fact, according to UNICEF, a worldwide organization dedicated to protecting children's rights, there are one hundred and sixty million kids in the world that are not able to go to school and have to work.

This fact made me sad, and made me start thinking about how unjust that is that those very kids who are making the high quality delicious chocolate probably cannot even eat it because they can't afford it. Plus, they aren't getting the education that they need that would help them get out of their sad situation. I think that every child should have the right to good education. Those opportunities should be fair and equal to everyone.

Talking about "fair" do you know the word "Fair Trade"? That is actually the name of a network of global trade organizations that have teamed up to help producers in developing countries to achieve sustainable and equitable trade relationships. This was made to cure this unfair problem by trading with fair prices to the producer. For example, this would ensure that the people producing the chocolate would be paid fairly and the families would be able to make a real living doing it.

The products that are traded by the fair trade network have the mark "Fair Trade" printed on it. These types of products are usually sold at convenience stores, supermarkets and other places. But one drawback... they are more expensive! For example, a chocolate bar that is 70g is 400 yen. In my budget, buying that kind of chocolate is pretty hard... But I think I would be able to buy one per month which I think is worth it so that I can do my part to help those families. I believe that if everyone was aware of fair trade and chose to only buy those products, that would really help improve the lives of those families that are struggling. So, next time you go to the store and see those two different chocolates, which one will you choose? The fair trade one or the regular one?

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The Unknown Truth about Chocolate