A la Chocolate! Chocolate is a favorite flavor of many people. Chocolate has even been considered healthy because it starts out from a tree before it becomes something to eat. In fact, it is so popular that there are many companies who have made a lot of money from selling chocolate in a variety of flavors and forms.

Chocolate comes from the cacao tree, grown in tropical rainforest areas of the world. A lot of cacao comes from South America and East Africa, where it is hot and people are poor, and sent around the world, where it is cool and people are richer. The cacao pod is the fruit and the pulp inside can be eaten, but it does not taste like chocolate. Did you know that the cacao has over 400 different smells? That explains why there are so many different flavors of chocolate!

Once cacao pods are opened and the pulp is cleaned out, the cocoa beans inside are cleaned and then roasted. Different kinds of beans require different times, temperatures, and amounts of moisture while roasting. Then the shells are removed, and the parts left are called nibs. The nibs then get milled to make a cocoa liquor where cocoa parts are mixed with cocoa butter. Cocoa butter is what is actually used to make chocolate.

Companies that make chocolate actually mix different types of beans together to create the different flavors. There are white chocolates which are not what most people think of when they first think of chocolate. Milk chocolates are sweet. And then there are dark chocolate flavors which many people think is too bitter, but others love.

Chocolate can be used to flavor many different kinds of desserts. Some people prefer to put fruit with chocolate like chocolate-covered cherries or as a garnish on a chocolate cake. Chocolate cake is a popular choice for birthday parties but many people think chocolate frosting on chocolate cake is too rich. Chocolate ice cream is another fun choice for celebrating the flavor. Chocolate chip cookies are a favorite cookie choice for many people. Brownies are yummy and can be topped with frosting just like cake. One entertaining choice for eating chocolate is a chocolate fountain. Chocolate is a liquid when warm and a solid when cooled, so a fountain keeps the chocolate moving and warm so it will not harden. Then people can dip fun dessert choices like marshmallows, rice krispie treats, fruit or cookies into the running chocolate and enjoy a chocolate covered treat when it cools.

Chocolate begins as a plant and ends up flavoring many different foods. While it is a process to grow and make chocolate, the end result is delicious, if you are a chocolate fan!