

We started eating chocolate 1,500 years earlier than previously thought, paper says

New archaeological evidence suggests humans were cultivating and consuming cacao—the crop from which chocolate is produced—as long as 5,300 years ago, which is 1,500 years earlier than previously thought. What’s more, cacao was initially domesticated in the equatorial regions of South America, and not Central America.

Humans, as a new [paper](#) published today [October 29] in *Nature Ecology & Evolution* shows, have been consuming chocolate for a very long time.

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[T]he researchers found starch grains linked to *Theobroma* inside pots, along with theobromine residue (a bitter alkaloid) that’s produced by *T. cacao* but not related wild species. What’s more, they also found bits of ancient DNA linked to *T. cacao*. With these three independent lines of evidence—starch grains, chemical biomarkers, and DNA sequences—the researchers have scored a hat-trick.

“These three methods combine to definitively identify a plant that is otherwise notoriously difficult to trace in the archaeological record because seeds and other parts quickly degrade in moist and warm tropical environments,” said [Sonia Zarrillo from the University of Calgary, lead author of the study].

**Read full, original article:** [Chocolate Has a New Origin Story](#)