The origins of cocoa can be traced to Latin America

Xocoatl – the cocoa drink of the gods takes the modern world by storm

The cocoa tree, also known as Theobroma cacao, thrives in warm and humid regions near the equator. Although its origins have not been conclusively proven, cocoa was probably already of great importance to ancient Latin American civilizations 2000 years before the birth of Christ. Historians have found the oldest cups and plates for eating and drinking cocoa in the small village of Ulúa in Honduras. These utensils were presumably used exclusively for preparing and enjoying Xocoatl, the original cocoa drink. Today, cocoa is cultivated primarily in the tropical rain forests of West Africa, Asia and Latin America, and the major cocoa-producing countries are Ivory Coast, Ghana and Indonesia.

There are **three distinct varieties of cocoa trees** along with numerous subspecies that have been created through cross-breeding:

- **The Criollo tree** is a rare variety and produces aromatic and very fine cocoa beans. These trees mainly grow in Latin America and are very vulnerable to meteorological changes and often have low yields.
- **The high-yielding Forastero tree**, which is grown on almost every cocoa plantation in West Africa, supplies about 70 percent of the world's cocoa crop.
- **The Trinitario tree** is a hybrid created by combining the high yield of the Forastero with the delicate flavor of the Criollo beans.

The unique, distinctive taste of cocoa beans varies according to the region, the weather, and the soil conditions where they are cultivated.

Beans from different countries are mixed in most chocolate recipes to ensure uniform taste and quality. There is also a pure chocolate called **origin chocolate** (i.e. unblended chocolate), which is made from cocoa beans that were grown in one particular region. This means every single origin chocolate has a unique, characteristic flavor.

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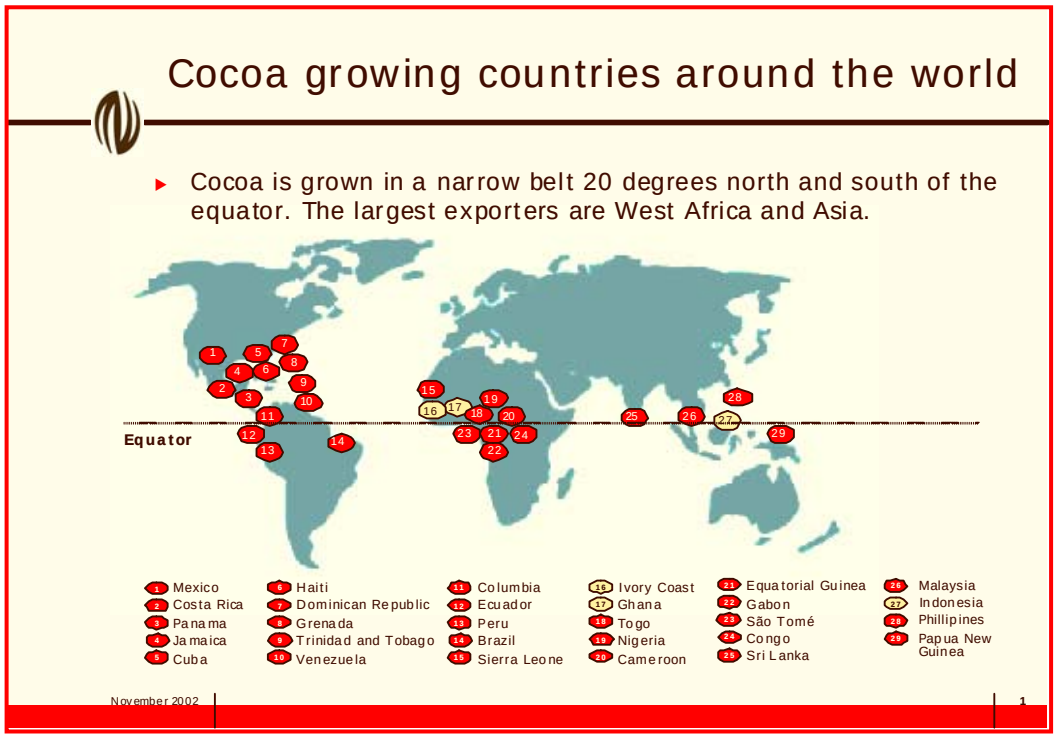

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