

All Natural Sugar Free Hot Cocoa



It's been a cold winter so far here in the Northeast, US. The other day the outdoor thermometer read a whopping 3F! And that's without the wind chill factor. Of course, my brother Rob calls me a lightweight when I complain about the cold. He's been seeing -14F with a wind chill of -40F out in Fargo, ND. Either way you slice it, cold is cold and cold weather and I don't get along very well. That's why this time of year I get nostalgic for hot cocoa.

It's one of the ultimate comfort foods and something that brings those memories of being a kid rushing back. Who doesn't remember coming home to a piping hot cup of hot chocolate after a long day of sledding and playing in the snow? The only problem is good luck finding a hot chocolate mix that isn't loaded with extra sugar or a "sugar-free" version that isn't a cloying mixture of artificial ingredients. Yuck!

I had been thinking for a while to experiment with natural cocoa powder and the opportunity arose recently when I tried out an [incredible low-carb fudge recipe](#) that Lynn Terry posted on her [Traveling Low Carb blog](#). She has two recipes: one for chocolate and peanut butter fudge and one for all peanut butter. They're both based on healthy coconut oil. She posted a great variation using heart-shaped molds to make Valentine's candies. Clever and delicious! I then got motivated and decided to try the chocolate and peanut combo fudge so I picked up a can of Hershey's Natural Unsweetened Cocoa.



Um, bitter!

The first thing you discover with this stuff is it's bitter. Not semi-sweet, dark chocolate bitter, which I love, but nose-crinkling, mouth puckering bitter! It almost seems like there's not enough sugar in the world to make this stuff palatable. Fortunately, liquid stevia once again came to my rescue and made everything all nice and sweet and perfect!

There's a recipe on the side of the Hershey's can for "Favorite Hot Cocoa." I modified it for a single cup—the recipe on the can makes four servings. I also replaced the sugar with sufficient liquid stevia and used some heavy whipping cream for some added richness and a silkier texture. The addition of heavy cream is essentially topping the finished product with a dollop of whipped cream, but for those too lazy (me) to make whipped cream. Whipped cream actually reverts back into cream form when it dissolves in the hot liquid, so no fuss, no muss! If you don't have cream on hand, then just replace it with more milk.

It took me a few tries to get the measurements just right. If you look at the recipe as a two-step process, then things come into focus. The first step is to make a thick chocolate sauce. This then forms the base for the milk portion. It's really very similar to making hot chocolate using Nestlé's or Hershey's chocolate syrup. Hot chocolate makes for a great snack in place of coffee or tea as well as a very satisfying and filling dessert. Just go easy on the mini marshmallows if you got 'em!

Serving Size: 10 oz

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 10 oz	
Servings Per Container 1	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 215	Calories from Fat 148.5
% Daily Values*	
Total Fat 16.5g	25%
Saturated Fat 9.4g	47%
Trans Fat 0g	
Sodium 671mg	28%
Total Carbohydrate 11g	4%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 0g	
Protein 6g	12%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Ingredients:



Yep, salt. Helps cut the bitterness.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ c water
- 1 Tbsp Hershey's Natural Unsweetened Cocoa Powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp vanilla extract
- Dash tsp salt
- 2 Tbsp heavy whipping cream
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c whole milk
- 4-8 drops liquid stevia

Directions:

1. In a small sauce pan, bring water to a boil.
2. Stir in cocoa powder with a wooden spoon. Mix well until powder is completely dissolved. Should form a thick chocolate syrup.
3. Lower heat and add salt and vanilla extract. Stir.
4. Add heavy whipping cream.
5. Gradually add milk while stirring. Raise heat slightly to just below a boil. Be careful not to scald the milk.
6. When thoroughly hot, pour into a coffee mug. You may want to use a teaspoon to mix in any remaining syrup at bottom of mug while drinking.



Serve hot – pug mug optional!