

Sawbones 76: Chocolate

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Intro (Clint McElroy):

Sawbones is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun.

Can't you just have fun for an hour and not try to diagnose... your mystery boil? We think you've earned it.

Just sit back, relax and enjoy a moment of distraction from... that weird growth. You're worth it.

[Intro, theme music plays]

Justin:

Hello, everybody, and welcome to *Sawbones: A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine*. I am your co-host, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

Sydnee, happy belated Valentine's Day.

Sydnee:

Aw. Thank you, love.

Justin:

I mean, I wished you a happy Valentine's Day on the day, but...

Sydnee:

You did, you did. You not only wished me happy Valentine's Day, you got me a valentine and candy. Well, chocolate.

Justin:

Yeah. Uh—

Sydnee:

Not candy... I don't know, was it...

Justin:

Enh.

Sydnee:

I- I don't know.

Justin:

I think... I don't know what you would c—

Sydnee:

You make the call. It's—

Justin:

... classify it.

Sydnee:

So it was... It was wonderful. Justin had delivered to me a platter of chocolate-covered Oreos and Nutter Butters and Graham crackers and pretzels.

Justin:

It's really hard once you're married to buy chocolate for the other person 'cause... especially if you're, like, trying to watch what you eat.

'Cause you're basically saying like, "Well, this is at our house for a while now. Now, you have this to contend with."

Sydnee:

Yeah, 'cause, I mean, I'm not gonna eat all of that.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

That would—

Justin:

So I'm gonna have to jump in there—

Sydnee:

That'd be bad.

Justin:

... and I'll feel obligated to... to help out, do my part.

Sydnee:

You know what's always nice, too, is my dad has gotten me a heart-shaped box of chocolates every Valentine's Day for as long as I've been allowed to eat chocolate.

Justin:

That's sweet.

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

That's nice. I gotta do that for Chuck when she's... I mean, now would not be good.

Sydnee:

No. Don't give her chocolate now. She's six months old. She can't eat chocolate.

Justin:

I... The... the... the... I have... We have been eating a considerable amount of chocolate though, I'll be honest. Despite my best efforts.

Sydnee:

Well, you know, that's not completely bad for you.

Justin:

Oh, yeah?

Sydnee:

There are some possible small health benefits to chocolate, or at least people have thought so for a long time.

Justin:

So you're saying it's a health food—

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

... and I'm crushing it?

Sydnee:

No, no. I'm not saying chocolate is a health food. I'm gonna say that several times, I think. [laughs]

Justin:

This one weird food will make you live 20 years longer.

Sydnee:

No. Mm-mm.

Justin:

It is chocolate.

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

Check it out.

Sydnee:

No, that's not what you're gonna get if you click on that link on Facebook. I don't know actually. I don't know what you're gonna get.

Probably *Garcinia cambogia*, probably. I don't know.

Justin:

How is—

Sydnee:

I haven't clicked on it.

Justin:

In... Uh, what makes chocolate the world's greatest health food, Sydnee?

Sydnee:

Okay, it's not. But let's... let's [laughing] talk about chocolate, because for a long time now, not just currently, but for a long time, we thought that it was a medicine of sorts.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And before I get into this, I wanna thank Adam for recommending this topic.

Justin:

Thanks, Adam.

Sydnee:

He thought it would be a good Valentine's Day topic, and we're close enough.

Justin:

It's there-ish.

Sydnee:

It's after. We're still within the, I don't know, perimeter of Valentine's Day.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Um, so people have been... Uh, first of all, chocolate goes back a long time.

Justin:

Sure. Aztecs.

Sydnee:

Largely, when we talk about early uses of chocolate, we're mainly talking about it as a drink.

People would take, you know, the cocoa beans and then crush them and add, like, hot water. And there was some sort of, like... So kind of like hot chocolate drink—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... or cold, sometimes a cold chocolate drink, but something... but a beverage.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

So largely, as we're talking about chocolate in ancient times and then throughout history, we're mainly talking about drinking chocolate.

Justin:

Cool.

Sydnee:

And then I'll tell you when we start switching to other forms.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

It dates back as far as 600 BC. And as you kind of alluded to, it was mainly in the Americas first.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

So in Mexico and in Central America. It actually reached Europe because Cortes brought it back, after visiting the native peoples there and discovering this amazing "brown gold," as it was sometimes called.

Justin:

Brown gold.

Sydnee:

Which, personally, I like chocolate a lot. So I think I would call gold, like, "yellow chocolate." [laughs]

Justin:

[laughs hard]

Sydnee:

[laughing] I mean, given the choice between the two...

Justin:

Slide a little bit of that yellow chocolate—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... on my finger, my man. We are gettin' hitched.

Sydnee:

I'd rather have that.

Justin:

Yeah. [laughing]

Sydnee:

Um. [laughs] In the early American cultures, it was a very precious drink. It wasn't something that you or I would probably have access to.

Justin:

C-... We aren't fancy enough?

Sydnee:

No, we are not. We, we of not... not of high enough stature.

Montezuma drank it.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Famous for the revenge.

Justin:

[laughs] Sure.

Sydnee:

Um—

Justin:

Of revenge fame.

Sydnee:

[laughs] He drank it before sex to give him energy and stamina 'cause it was thought to provide both of those things.

Justin:

You know that worked.

Sydnee:

Uh, and it... Huh?

Justin:

You know, you know, uh, they say chocolate is the food of love.

Sydnee:

[laughs] We're quoting *The Room* now.

Justin:

It's gonna be a good episode.

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm. I like where we're going.

In general, it was seen as a strengthening drink, that it was... it would give you a lot of—

Justin:

Vigor.

Sydnee:

Yes. And for that reason, it was not suitable for women and children.

[laughs] Only for men.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Who needed to be strong... and tough.

Justin:

You give women and children too much stamina, who knows what's gonna happen?

Sydnee:

I don't... They're gonna not be oppressed by men?

Justin:

I guess.

Sydnee:

Was that the worry?

Justin:

But that- that's what our secret this whole time, men—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... has been chocolate.

Sydnee:

Keeping... If you... If your plan was—

Justin:

Keepin' women and kids away from chocolate.

Sydnee:

... keeping women and children away from chocolate, you've done a really bad job. I think chocolate is primarily marketed to women and children.

[laughs]

Justin:

Yeah. It fixes every problem women have, according to Dove commercials.

Sydnee:

Yeah. That's not true, but that's okay.

If you drank too much chocolate, it could make you deranged, or at least that was the thought. Now, drinking too much could make you deranged, or so it was thought, but—

Justin:

Too, too much vigor, too much vim.

Sydnee:

Yes. You'd just get, like, so much energy.

Justin:

[grunts] We'll flip a table.

Sydnee:

But in moderation, it was invigorating... invigorating, and you could use it for anything. Angina, dysentery, dental problems, indigestion, constipation, fatigue, hemorrhoids, it cured kidney disease.

Justin:

It didn't.

Sydnee:

No, but they used it—

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... for all those things. We have evidence that it was used for all of these things.

Justin:

Sometimes you get a little carried away and you forget your... your old-timey, um... Well "Didn'ts", I guess you could call them. "The Didn'ts", where you'd say, "They didn't do this."

And instead—

Sydnee:

That's true.

Justin:

... you get so swept up in the mythos that you say that they did.

Sydnee:

It did all this stuff!

Justin:

It didn't!

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

It didn't. And it was very much seen, I think, in these cultures as like a spiritual thing. It was this amazing, tasty beverage [laughs] that probably made you healthy in a lot of ways.

It wasn't formalized until it was brought over to Europe, probably in the 16th century. First, via Spain. It was... Cortes brought it back to the king of Spain.

And then they, as it spread throughout Europe, people began to see it in light of the, what was then the system of medicine, the four humors.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

So just to review, because, we kinda reference it a lot but I don't think we've talked about the four humors for a while.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So—

Justin:

Have we done a four humors episode?

Sydnee:

We'd never done an episode just on the four humors.

Justin:

We probably should.

Sydnee:

So, just in general, we used to think that all medicine was the result of- or all medicine was based on- the idea that the human body had four different fluids in it, basically.

Blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm.

And if you had all of those things in the proper balance, you were healthy. And if they got out of balance, you got sick. So it's pretty much... that's pretty much the gist of it.

Justin:

Got it.

Sydnee:

Now, what went along with that was also this belief that people had different, like, climates.

Justin:

Individual people had different climates?

Sydnee:

Well, depending on what age you were. So for instance, babies and little kids were hot and humid.

Young adults were hot and dry.

Adults were cold and dry.

And old people were cold and humid.

And when you get your humors out of balance, these, these natural climates [laughs] get out of whack, and then you need to eat or drink something that's kind of the opposite in order to balance it.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Do you see what I'm sayin'?

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

So—

Justin:

Like when you gets— You eat too many pretzels, you get a little bit of a dry mouth and you need somethin' to balance it out, like a frosty soda?

Sydnee:

I'm sorry, do you mean peezels? [laughs]

Justin:

Peezels. Sal- So many salty peezels and you gotta frost you up a so-so to just wash it all down.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Eh, that's similar. That's a—

Justin:

Similar, right?

Sydnee:

That's a fair... Yeah.

Justin:

Basically.

Sydnee:

Yeah. I mean, that's generally... 'Cause cocoa was seen as cool and dry, and it would ward off hot, humid conditions.

Justin:

It works in the York Peppermint Patty commercials from way back when.

Sydnee:

That's true. They make it sound like eating something with chocolate in it is a very crisp, cool—

Justin:

Refreshing, yeah.

Sydnee:

And it's... I mean, nothing against York Peppermint Patties. Like, I like 'em. I don't think... I mean, it's refreshing.

Justin:

I don't think they're—

Sydnee:

It's chocolate.

Justin:

... ever big enough.

Sydnee:

It's candy.

Justin:

I need one the size of a dinner plate.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

'Cause they're so thin, I feel like I'm not eating anything ever. It doesn't matter how big they are either.

Sydnee:

[laughing] No.

Justin:

You get one of those big ones, it's like, "What did I just do? That wasn't a candy bar." You know?

Like, you just get... Put it in a shape that I understand.

Sydnee:

When you say you need one the size of a dinner plate—

Justin:

Need. One. The size of a dinner plate to be... for it to be satisfying.

Sydnee:

Okay. I think you'd feel awful.

Justin:

I'd get the sensation, but I want the—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... the other sensation of being full from a York Peppermint Patty.

Sydnee:

[laughs] You'd get the sensation that you were gonna spend the rest of the day throwing up.

Justin:

No. I wouldn't. I'd feel great, so refreshed. Whoop. Like, whizzing down a mountain slope on ice and snow on skis.

Sydnee:

Nobody, nobody has eaten a York Peppermint Patty the size of a dinner plate and felt like skiing afterwards. [laughs]

Justin:

Nobody better have ever eaten the size... a York Peppermint Patty the size of a dinner plate, period, 'cause nobody called me about it to say, "J-man, you gotta get up in this."

And I've made my desire to eat a giant York Peppermint Patty very clear.

Sydnee:

Okay. Well, now everyone knows. So...

Justin:

So...

Sydnee:

The word is out.

Justin:

PO Box 54—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... Huntington, West Virginia 25706. If you come across a—

Sydnee:

Please don't.

Justin:

... giant York Peppermint Patty-

Sydnee:

Don't do this.

Justin:

... the size of a dinner plate so I could be satisfied...

Sydnee:

Please do not do this. Thank you.

Okay, so you could just take chocolate alone, cocoa alone.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Or you could add different things to it, depending on what sickness you had.

So alone, for instance, you would make your cocoa beverage, your chocolate, and it could treat liver disease.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Or breast issues in general. Or stomach problems. So that's a big list.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

If you add gum to it, you can stop diarrhea.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

If you add corn and—

Justin:

[snorts]

Sydnee:

... vanilla and then make a paste out of it and then put it on you? Or maybe eat it? I'm not sure. Then it's an aphrodisiac.

I'm gonna guess eat it, 'cause if you're covered in corn chocolate vanilla paste... Well...

Justin:

Enh, I don't know.

Sydnee:

I... I wouldn't...

Justin:

There's a... That's a thing.

Sydnee:

Depending on what you- What you're into.

Justin:

It's a thing.

Sydnee:

Maybe. Okay. There's a bunch of other, like, herbs and plants you could mix it with, and it would fatten people up.

And chocolate was generally seen that way throughout the centuries, was if somebody was, like, sickly and thin and, you know, had something that was causing them to waste away?

Chocolate was a good food for them. It would fatten them up.

Justin:

But you gotta go by how you feel, right?

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

So sometimes, you feel like a nut in your chocolate.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

And sometimes you don't? Right? [laughs]

Sydnee:

Right. I think this probably predates Almond Joys.

Justin:

[laughing] Okay.

Sydnee:

But not Mounds. [laughing] Mounds were definitely around at this point.

Justin:

Mounds are ancient.

Sydnee:

Um—

Justin:

Most Mounds you see were made in the Dark Ages.

Sydnee:

You could find all kinds of recipes for your health chocolate, for your medicinal chocolate.

Justin:

You know, just friggin' scroll Pinterest. You're gonna hit the feed of—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

“Use this ancient chocolate blend to help cure depression.” Uh, yes, I'm onto you, but thank you.

Sydnee:

Well- [laughs]

Justin:

Do appreciate the effort.

Sydnee:

One that I found, and this is a great recipe. This is specifically for people who are sick, but not with a fever. So if they have some sort of illness, but not one that has a fever. Careful.

You could use cocoa, sugar, cinnamon, vanilla, cloves, anise, chili powder and serve it as a warm drink. And you could also add almonds if you wanted to.

Justin:

So wait.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Sometimes, if you feel like a nut...

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

The thing is, that's... I mean, that sounds delicious.

Justin:

Yeah, it sounds restorative, I would say.

Sydnee:

So, I mean, I—

Justin:

Except for the anise.

Sydnee:

Yeah, I know you don't—

Justin:

Ugh, keep it.

Sydnee:

... you don't dig that.

Justin:

Ugh.

Sydnee:

But this sounds like a delicious, spicy chocolate drink.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Like, this is... this would be great. I can see why you would want to drink this.

Justin:

And curative, too.

Sydnee:

And—

Justin:

Is the other thing.

Sydnee:

And part of the reason that the view of chocolate as something that was medicinal was very important as it flourished, you know, in different countries in Europe—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... because religious groups started denouncing it pretty quickly. Chocolate was seen as something decadent. It did, because- Largely because people tended to add things like sugar to it.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

It could make you invigorated. It was seen as something connected to, like, you know, sexual feelings.

So it would encourage sinful impulses, was the fear.

So if you just drank it without having to, for a medicinal reason, you were seen as kind of being sinful or as giving into a sinful impulse.

So you needed a doctor to [laughing] prescribe it to you in order to get away with it.

It's like, I don't know, marijuana?

Justin:

Right. It's medicinal chocolate.

Sydnee:

It was medicinal chocolate... "No, no, no. It's cool. I have glaucoma."
[laughs]

Justin:

I got a license for this chocolate. I got a prescription.

Sydnee:

So as a result of this, doctors expanded its use to everything. It was a diuretic, meaning it would make you pee. It was an expectorant, so it would, you know, make you cough or, you know, break stuff up.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

If you mixed it wi-... This was probably a less favorable recipe. If you mixed it with ground human skull—

Justin:

Ew.

Sydnee:

... musk and ambergris—

Justin:

That's what's in a Whatchamacallit.

Sydnee:

Then—

Justin:

So now you know. There's your answer.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Don't- Now don't—

Justin:

Those are the ingredients of a Whatchamacallit.

Sydnee:

We, we... Those are not, in fact, the ingredients of a Whatchamacallit. Whoever makes that, please don't sue us.

Justin:

[snorts]

Sydnee:

But this—

Justin:

What's ambergris?

Sydnee:

So ambergris is... Oh, this is gross. It's a waxy substance that is produced in the digestive tract of sperm whales.

Justin:

Ew.

Sydnee:

And it was largely used as a perfume base, like a fixative for perfume? Nowadays we usually don't use that. We use synthetic things, but you still could use it for that.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So if you wanted to mix that with some human skull, musk and chocolate, that would be good for [laughing] hypochondria.

Largely because I think if you gave somebody this, they'd go, "I'm not ever sick again. I'm never... I'm fine. No. I'm sorry. I'm sorry I said I was sick."

As it spread throughout Europe, there were three main areas- and I kind of alluded to this- that it was used in in medicine.

It was weight gain for the sickly. It stimulated the nervous system, so for people who felt, like, fatigued or just kind of puny, wimpy people.

And it improved your digestion.

Whereas one, I liked this one quote from a French doctor, "Therefore, the use of chocolate is salubrious. It excites and strengthens with its warm, mild juiciness the bowel's inborn warmth and strength.

"It helps digestion. It fosters the spread of food and the secretion of the unnecessary. It accumulates fat. It is not an enemy to the brain. It is Venus's friend and very suitable for body and soul."

Justin:

That's nice. That... You couldn't fit all that on a wrapper, but it's nice.

Sydnee:

No. And I mean I think, you know, some of that, yeah. Sure. I think chocolate is very suitable for [laughing] body and soul.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

The Grand Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici found it great for flatulence.

Justin:

[snorts]

Sydnee:

So... [laughs] Which he felt the need to record for history.

Justin:

[As the Grand Duke] "Scribe!"

Sydnee:

So we can all know that now.

Justin:

[As the Grand Duke] "Write this down!"

Sydnee:

There was this great spread of chocolate, over, you know, over the continent of Europe.

There was finally some pushback against it when it hit Florence. And it Florence in a big way. Flo-... The Flor- Floren- Florenians?

Justin:

Floridians.

Sydnee:

Fl-... [laughs] Floridians?

Justin:

Floridians. [laughs] I know, it's hard to believe.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I think that's Florida.

Justin:

Italians.

Sydnee:

Yes. Were way into chocolate. And in the 18th century, there was a doctor there, Dr. Giovan Battista Felici, also known as the [laughing] Great Chocolate Accuser.

Justin:

Ugh, that is a... What a distinction that is.

Sydnee:

And he thought, uh, cocoa... Basically, he didn't think it was medicine, and part of his reason is he thought it was mislabeled.

I kinda said that it was seen as a cold, dry substance. And so in the humoral—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... system of medicine, it would be used for hot things.

Well, he thought it was mislabeled and that it was a hot substance. And especially because we tended to drink it hot and we added all of these spices to it and sugar and whatnot.

And so as a result, if you drank a lot of it, it would ferment your blood and then your blood would spoil.

And I don't know what that means, but it would be bad probably.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

If your blood spoiled.

So he started [laughing] accusing chocolate, started the Chocolate Inquisition.

There was a guy in Florence who worked at a coffee shop, Francesco Zeti, who- His name, he was known as "The Hunchback of Panone."

Justin:

Why's that?

Sydnee:

Because that was the coffee shop he worked at and he was a hunchback.
[laughs]

Justin:

That's not super clever, but...

Sydnee:

Which I don't know. If those two are the two people, the corners of the ring.

Over here, we've got the Great Chocolate Accuser. And over here, we've got the Hunchback of Panone. I don't know... I don't know who's gonna win.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

But he was really worried that his business would drop off, 'cause in addition to coffee at their shop, they sold chocolate drinks.

And he was afraid, "Oh my gosh. If business drops off, I'm gonna get fired." He didn't own the shop either.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

This was just a guy who worked there who was really worried about his job. And so he wink, wink "commissioned" a report from a doctor that was anonymous about how great chocolate was and then published it.

Justin:

Sort of—

Sydnee:

A Defense of Chocolate.

Justin:

Sort of like those old tobacco ads that tell you, like, "This specific brand is good for your T-zone."

Sydnee:

[laughs] Yeah, that was pretty much it. He was like, "No, no, no. Look, I've got this report from a doctor, locally. And he won't give his name, but I swear a doctor definitely wrote this about how great chocolate is."

Justin:

And he says, "Chocolate's great."

Sydnee:

Basically all the people who made chocolate jumped in defense of Zeti and joined his side. And obviously, chocolate kinda won out.

Justin:

And that's how lobbying was invented.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

So what's next, Syd? Let's move closer into the future, yet still past, of chocolate.

Sydnee:

Well, Justin, I'd be happy to do that for you. But why don't you head on down to the billing department with me first?

Justin:

Let's go.

[ad break, theme music plays]

Sydnee:

So in the 18th century, chocolate is, at this point, well-established as a medicinal beverage.

But now it's especially recommended that you melt it and add it to milk. Come on, guys. Like, we're on to you. Like, we know. I mean, this is hot chocolate.

Justin:

Mmm... it's hot chocolate.

Sydnee:

I mean, that's—

Justin:

It's a good try, but—

Sydnee:

I mean, it's great, but—

Justin:

It's great. It's great.

Sydnee:

It's funny. You can even find- it's suggested- that if you couldn't afford chocolate... Because by now, of course, it had spread to the... Everybody was... it was recommended, "Hey. For your health, eat chocolate."

But not everybody could afford to buy it. So you could make, like, a fake chocolate by toasting flour and then mix it with sugar and milk and egg yolks.

Justin:

Okay. [hesitantly] That... sounds... good? I would actually try that, I think.

Sydnee:

That's not chocolate.

Justin:

It's not chocolate.

Sydnee:

Do you remember that cooking show we were watching where somebody tried to make chocolate? Do you remember that lady? It was like *The Worst Cooks* or something, and she tried—

Justin:

Oh!

Sydnee:

She thought she could—

Justin:

Worst Cooks in America!

Sydnee:

She thought you could make chocolate by... I don't even remember what she put in there.

Justin:

Oh... Oh, yeah, I do remember that though. Yeah. She was tryin' to make chocolate. Holy crap, that was great.

Sydnee:

With, like, peanut butter or...

Justin:

I think she was trying to... Yeah, like—

Sydnee:

Karo syrup or...?

Justin:

Something.

Sydnee:

Something.

Justin:

It was [crosstalk].

Sydnee:

I don't know. It's like she didn't know that chocolate was, like, a—

Justin:

A thing.

Sydnee:

You know, there's cocoa.

Justin:

Yeah, there's—

Sydnee:

Like, there's a... There's something that—

Justin:

There's a thing called chocolate.

Sydnee:

... denotes chocolate.

Justin:

Right. Yeah, no, chocolate's like a actual substance.

Sydnee:

Uh, in—

Justin:

And it's not toasted flour.

Sydnee:

No, it is not. It's not. In the 19th century, we start to see chocolate in different forms coming into play, and then some famous chocolate names.

For instance, John Cadbury.

Justin:

Oh, yeah.

Sydnee:

Was a Quaker. Who—

Justin:

You know, they're getting stricter about importin', uh, Cadbury chocolate into the US.

Sydnee:

I know.

Justin:

It's getting to be a thing. Not... Not Cadbury, like, as we know it, but British Cadbury chocolate.

Sydnee:

Which is—

Justin:

Not like—

Sydnee:

... it's better.

Justin:

... Cadbury Crème Eggs and Cadbury Mini Eggs.

Sydnee:

Which are great, but the—

Justin:

Which are great.

Sydnee:

But the Dairy Milks?

Justin:

Cadbury Mini Eggs are basically the best. [lustfully] Oh.

Sydnee:

The Dairy Milks? Oh, man. You guys know how to do chocolate. Sorry, everybody who loves Hershey's but—

Justin:

Yeah. It's...

Sydnee:

... there it is.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Um—

Justin:

There's no comparison.

Sydnee:

So John Cadbury was concerned about how much everybody was drinking booze.

And he thought, "You know what'd be better? Is if everybody started drinking chocolate instead, because it's still tasty and it's good for you.

"So I'm going to start making chocolate and encouraging everybody to drink it, and advertising it as good for you."

Which obviously turned out well—

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

... for us all now.

Chocolate was also, at the time, considered a healthier alternative to tea, and so it was encouraged that, especially since we had all kinds of kids who were—

Justin:

[disbelieving] Healthier than tea?

Sydnee:

Uh-huh. Chocolate was healthier than tea. So, you know, we've got all these poor kids who were stuck in, like, factories and workhouses, and they were all sickly 'cause they didn't have a lot of food.

The thought was like, "Well, if we could give them each a little bit of chocolate every day, they'd all be healthy."

Justin:

I mean, they'd be happier, I think.

Sydnee:

They'd definitely be happier. It was linked heavily with energy, with vigor, being, you know, kinda robust. There was—

Justin:

Oh, that's, like, really old school, just the fact that.. You know, that association went back, you know, thousands of years at this point.

Sydnee:

Oh yeah, no. And, I mean, chocolate has always...

And I don't know if it's because early on, like, the idea of mixing chocolate with sugar is... or cocoa with sugar and, you know, kinda making chocolate was not, like... That was not new.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

People have been doing that for a very long time. And sugar, obviously, makes you feel more energetic.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

But... but I guess just the properties from cocoa alone, people felt better afterwards.

Justin:

So strange.

Sydnee:

Makes me feel good.

Justin:

Yeah. Right.

Sydnee:

There was one testimonial from that time period I read that there was a husband who was being treated by his doctor with chocolate.

His doctor was... had prescribed him drinking some chocolate every evening for some sort of respiratory condition that he had.

And his wife decided, "You know, while he's drinking chocolate, I'm gonna... I mean, it's good. I'll drink some chocolate too. And it's good for you, so what can it hurt?"

And the story goes that she ended up getting pregnant even though she was supposed to be barren.

Justin:

Chocolate?!

Sydnee:

[sarcastic] So chocolate'll get you pregnant. [laughs]

Justin:

[sarcastic] Chocolate will get you pregnant.

Sydnee:

I think that's the hope on Valentine's Day, right?

Justin:

Yep.

Sydnee:

And this is also the same—

Justin:

Well, no.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

No. [laughs] No, not that.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

I don't think...

[deep voice] "You know what, baby? Tonight, I'm gonna get you pregnant."

Sydnee:

[laughs] Isn't that what—

Justin:

[deep voice] "Here. Try, try one of the—"

Sydnee:

[laughing] Isn't that what men are trying to do when they give women chocolate?

Justin:

[deep voice] "Try one of the coconut caramels."

Sydnee:

They're trying to get you pregnant.

Justin:

[deep voice] "Gonna impregnate... Uh, you're gonna be pregnant like this particular, uh, bonbon is pregnant with strawberry crème."

Sydnee:

[laughing] I better... I'm gonna... I'm gonna tell Charlie that to scare her, "If any boy gives you chocolate—"

Justin:

He's trying to get you pregnant.

Sydnee:

"... he's trying to... Run."

Justin:

Even if it's—

Sydnee:

"Come tell Mommy."

Justin:

[whispers] Even if it's the Easter Bunny.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

[whispers] Especially if it's the Easter Bunny.

Sydnee:

Watch out for Santa.

Justin:

[whispers] Watch out for Santa.

Sydnee:

He tries to trick you by giving you an orange.

Justin:

[snorts]

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Nice try.

Sydnee:

[laughing] This is also the same—

Justin:

Nice try.

Sydnee:

... century in which Nestlé invented powdered milk chocolate. And this, this trend developed of of milk chocolate at this point.

And this was kind of a double-edged sword because on one hand, it was not as healthy.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Milk chocolate. But on the other hand, this was a powdered thing that everybody could get and keep on your shelf. And so the use of chocolate became much more widespread as a result.

We also see the chocolate bar making its debut. And these different forms of chocolate, like different...

Not just as a, like a liquid, but, like, different solids, not only led to it being, you know, more widespread just as chocolate, but also being used in medicines in different ways.

So, like, coating pills and tablets and stuff with chocolate—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... became very popular.

Justin:

Like Miracle Max?

Sydnee:

Exactly like Miracle Max. That's what you gotta do. It helps it go down better.

And the idea of health chocolate became a thing as well, so we start to see products... 'Cause we're kinda movin' into the patent medicine era.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And chocolate played a role in that.

And we've talked about this before, like medicines that really contained things like alcohol or cocaine or something, opium, to give you an effect, but nothing that they... nothing like what they advertised it would do.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Similarly, chocolate was used this way. So you could see, like, Dr. Day's Chocolate Tonic Laxative, which just tasted like chocolate. I don't know, it probably- It, you know, it probably was a laxative.

We were really good at making laxatives back then.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughing] That was one of the things we could do.

If you needed to poop, we could fix that.

Justin:

We got you.

Sydnee:

There was also... One I liked was Halswell Vigor Chocolate.

Justin:

That sounds good.

Sydnee:

You know, even the Heath Bar, which came out—

Justin:

Oh my gosh.

Sydnee:

... early into the 20th century, the Heath bar was supposed to be healthy for you. Its original slogan was "Heath for better health."

Justin:

Nice try. Guys, it's literally—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... it's toffee and chocolate. There's not even, like, nuts to help you make your case.

At least Snickers, they're like, "You'll be full afterwards." Snickers's whole campaign is like, "Eat one of these, you won't wanna eat anything else 'cause ugh, what'd I do?"

Sydnee:

[laughs] I don't think that's how the ad goes.

Justin:

It's, yeah, that's basically how the ad goes.

Sydnee:

This is also the century where Milton Hershey makes his debut. And you know, we kinda... That changes the whole concept of chocolate on the US side.

And ads for Hershey's at the time also pushed chocolate as kind of like a healthy substance, similar to, like, you know, we... when you see, like, the old Guinness ads like, "Guinness is good for you."

There are old Hershey's ads where it's like, "Hershey's for your health," and—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... that kinda thing.

So as we move into the 20th century, we initially still have this view that chocolate is a health food.

And it's even included in rations in World War II. Everybody gets a little bit of chocolate.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Like, all the soldiers 'cause they need it. It is seen not just like a... not a treat for our fighting men and women, but... Or our fighting men at the time.

But like something they—

Justin:

Something they need to keep up the strength—

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

... in the fight with the Huns.

Sydnee:

Exactly. [laughing] They need the chocolate.

But what really... what really starts to move chocolate away from a medicine and into the just food realm is the assertion that fat is bad for you, which we get later in the 1900s.

Justin:

Ruined everything.

Sydnee:

Um, [laughs]... At this point, because there... You know, if you were just talking about the pure cocoa beans, you know, you're not talking about a lot of fat.

But the way that we eat chocolate, there is a lot of fat.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

You know, we eat it with... It's got all the sugar and everything.

Justin:

Butter, cream.

Sydnee:

The carbohydrates and then all the butter and cream to make it... Whatever you're gonna make out of the chocolate.

So chocolate started to be seen as an indulgence and something that wasn't really good for you.

And by the 1950s, we see chocolate really just marketed at this point for being yummy and a treat and something decadent and something that you would have, like, on a special occasion.

And not something that you would take, certainly to, you know, make you healthy.

Justin:

Oh, man!

Sydnee:

But—

Justin:

Oh, it's making a comeback!

Sydnee:

That's—

Justin:

Now it's good again.

Sydnee:

Yeah. That's not the end of the story. Nowadays, and this- I won't say this is really recent. I think that people have been saying this probably for a good 10, 20 years now.

There is some evidence that maybe chocolate is good for you.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

Especially chocolate that's more chocolate, more cocoa. You know, dark chocolate? And that's where that comes from. The more chocolate that's in there and the less other stuff, the better it's thought to be for you.

So we see some... There are some studies that suggest maybe it's heart healthy, like it improves your HDL, your good cholesterol. There's a lot... People always talk about flavonoids.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

I always loved to hear that. People will ask me like, "Well, I need to eat dark chocolate, right? And drink some red wine for the flavonoids."

And it's like, "Well, I mean..."

Justin:

There are probably other ways to get your flavonoids in.

Sydnee:

Yeah, and, you know, I'm... I won't... I don't prescribe dark chocolate. I don't think we're back at that point where we start to see chocolate as something that you could actually prescribe people.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

But it definitely is seen as healthier for you than it was before. It's also maybe an antioxidant.

Justin:

But it's one of those- The darker the better, right?

Sydnee:

That's... Yes, that's generally true with chocolate. I mean, again, just because you're getting more choc-... like, the actual cocoa.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

I mean, because, you know, you can't eat 100% chocolate chocolate.

Justin:

Maybe you can't.

Sydnee:

What... I mean, it's very bitter.

Justin:

Ugh.

Sydnee:

Chocolate has a bitter flavor.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Like, pure chocolate. It's bitter. And so we throw the sugar in there so that it tastes good.

Justin:

I used to not be able to eat, like, even Hershey's Special Dark. Couldn't do it.

Sydnee:

Oh, man. You're crazy.

Justin:

I know. But now, I'm into it.

Sydnee:

Oh, I love dark chocolate. And let's be honest. Chocolate is just really good.
[laughs]

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

So I think that it's... I think it's funny. It's probably our nature to try to find a justification—

Justin:

There's no need, people.

Sydnee:

... for eating chocolate. I don't think there is. Just eat it in moderation. It's like anything else.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

You know, maybe... maybe dark chocolate is a little bit good for you, but eating, you know, that entire platter of chocolate-covered Nutter Butters and Oreos that I have downstairs probably isn't.

So, you know.

Justin:

So just know what you're doing when you absolutely do eat the entire platter of chocolate-covered—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... Nutter Butters with Graham crackers like we have.

Thanks to The Taxpayers for lettin' us use their song "Medicines" as our intro and outro of the program.

Thanks to you for listening.

Thanks to Maximum Fun Network for havin' us on. There's a lot of great shows on there for you to listen to at maximumfun.org. *Lady to Lady*, *The Goosedown*. *One Bad Mother* is a great show about being a mom. Um...

Sydnee:

My Brother, My Brother and Me.

Justin:

Thank you, dear. Uh, *Judge John Hodgman*, *Jordan*, *Jesse*, *Go!* and so many more. So go check those totally out. We love being on maximumfun.org and there's a lot of great shows there. So don't miss 'em.

Anyway thanks for listening. We'll be back next Tuesday with another episode of *Sawbones*.

Until then, I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

And as always, don't drill a hole in your head.

[outro, theme music plays]

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