

8.3: Couverture

The usual term for top quality chocolate is **couverture**. Couverture chocolate is a very high-quality chocolate that contains extra cocoa butter. The higher percentage of cocoa butter, combined with proper tempering, gives the chocolate more sheen, firmer “snap” when broken, and a creamy mellow flavor. Dark, milk, and white chocolate can all be made as couvertures.

The total percentage cited on many brands of chocolate is based on some combination of cocoa butter in relation to cocoa liquor. In order to be labelled as couverture by European Union regulations, the product must contain not less than 35% total dry cocoa solids, including not less than 31% cocoa butter and not less than 2.5% of dry non-fat cocoa solids. Couverture is used by professionals for dipping, coating, moulding, and garnishing.

What the percentages don’t tell you is the proportion of cocoa butter to cocoa solids. You can, however, refer to the nutrition label or company information to find the amounts of each. All things being equal, the chocolate with the higher fat content will be the one with more cocoa butter, which contributes to both flavor and mouthfeel. This will also typically be the more expensive chocolate, because cocoa butter is more valuable than cocoa liquor.

But keep in mind that just because two chocolates from different manufacturers have the same percentages, they are not necessarily equal. They could have dramatically differing amounts of cocoa butter and liquor, and dissimilar flavors, and substituting one for the other can have negative effects for your recipe. Determining the amounts of cocoa butter and cocoa liquor will allow you to make informed decisions on chocolate choices.

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