

Kid's KOrner

Chocolate: food of the gods

WASHINGTON — New World explorer Hernan Cortes was so impressed to find Aztec Emperor Montezuma drinking "xocoatl" out of golden goblets that he took some cacao beans, source of the precious beverage, home to Spain in 1528.

Thus was born today's multibillion-dollar chocolate industry, built on the universal craving for the product of a wondrous tree labeled Theobroma — "food of the gods." That lyrical nomenclature was furnished by Linnaeus, the great classifier who was known for his scientific detachment.

Cortes, a man with his eye on a golden doubloon, and his fellow Spaniards took some of the miracle beans to Trinidad, Haiti, and the West African island of Fernando Po, now Bioko.

CACAO LIKES IT HOT

From Fernando Po to the mainland went one pod of beans. Today, all the world's cacao comes from a dozen nations within 20 degrees of the equator, in moist, tropical climates. Bahia state, in eastern Brazil, and the Ivory Coast account for 45 percent of the beans.

The Spanish nobility added cane sugar and water to the brew introduced by Cortes, and heated it. For almost a century, Spain had a virtual monopoly on the cacao-bean market.

But word of the delectable drink

eventually spread around Europe. By the early 1700s, chocolate houses were starting to compete with coffeehouses in London. In 1765, a chocolate factory opened in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

In 1828, a Dutch chemist learned to press the fatty cocoa butter out of the beans and make cocoa powder. In 1847, "eating chocolate" came on the scene when cocoa butter and sugar were mixed with a paste of ground beans.

The Swiss made a big breakthrough in 1875, mixing condensed milk with chocolate to produce solid milk chocolate. New machines added smoothness by stirring, or conching, the liquid chocolate.

Before long, an enterprising American named Milton Hershey became the Henry Ford of chocolate-makers, mass-producing it to make it affordable.

Today the United States leads the world both in cacao-bean imports and in chocolate production. But Europeans are bigger chocolate-eaters. The Swiss are the biggest, with annual per-capita consumption of about 22 pounds.

IN SWEET PURSUIT

Gordon Young followed the chocolate trail around the world, from the tree to the table. The only common denominator he found in

the dozen candy factories he visited in the United States and Europe was automation.

Young also reports a number of other facts about chocolate. Among them:

—Candymakers sometimes use other ingredients, usually vegetable oils, in place of cocoa butter, and the results must, by law, be called "confectionery coating" instead of chocolate.

—Baby Ruth candy bars, which have such a non-chocolate coating, didn't get their name from the late baseball star, but from the youngest daughter of President Grover Cleveland.

—Cocoa butter's oily smoothness and low melting point make it a common ingredient in cosmetics and suntan lotions.

—Chocolate itself is almost free of salt and cholesterol. Other ingredients in candy may not be.

—Chocolate, its trade associations assert, causes neither acne nor cavities.

—Consumed in sufficient quantities, it will make you fat. But it is an excellent high-energy food that has been eaten everywhere, including on Mount Everest and aboard orbiting spacecraft.

—People who touted chocolate as an aphrodisiac in 17th-century Europe may have had a point. It contains small amounts of phenylethylamine, a chemical in the brain that, some say, increases when folks fall in love.

Chocoholics, as Young calls them, even have their own magazine, Chocolate News. It is printed with chocolate-colored and chocolate-scented ink.

PROHIBITION LINGERS

Some of the finest chocolate confections from Europe contain alcohol. Therefore, by law they can't be imported into the United States.

Young declines to answer the question that nagged him throughout his travels: Who makes the world's best chocolate? The ultimate answer, he concludes, "lies in the taste buds of each chocolate lover."

To illustrate the commitment some chocoholics have to certain companies, he tells the story of a New York hostess who sent her chauffeur to a London chocolate-maker to replace her dwindling supply of dinner mints.



Barcelona confectioner Jose Balcells Pallares sneaks a taste of his 8½-foot semisweet chocolate model of the Statue of Liberty. He and an assistant spent three days of intense craftsmanship in creating the 229-pound sculpture. How does Pallares manage to stay so slim? By "working hard," he says.

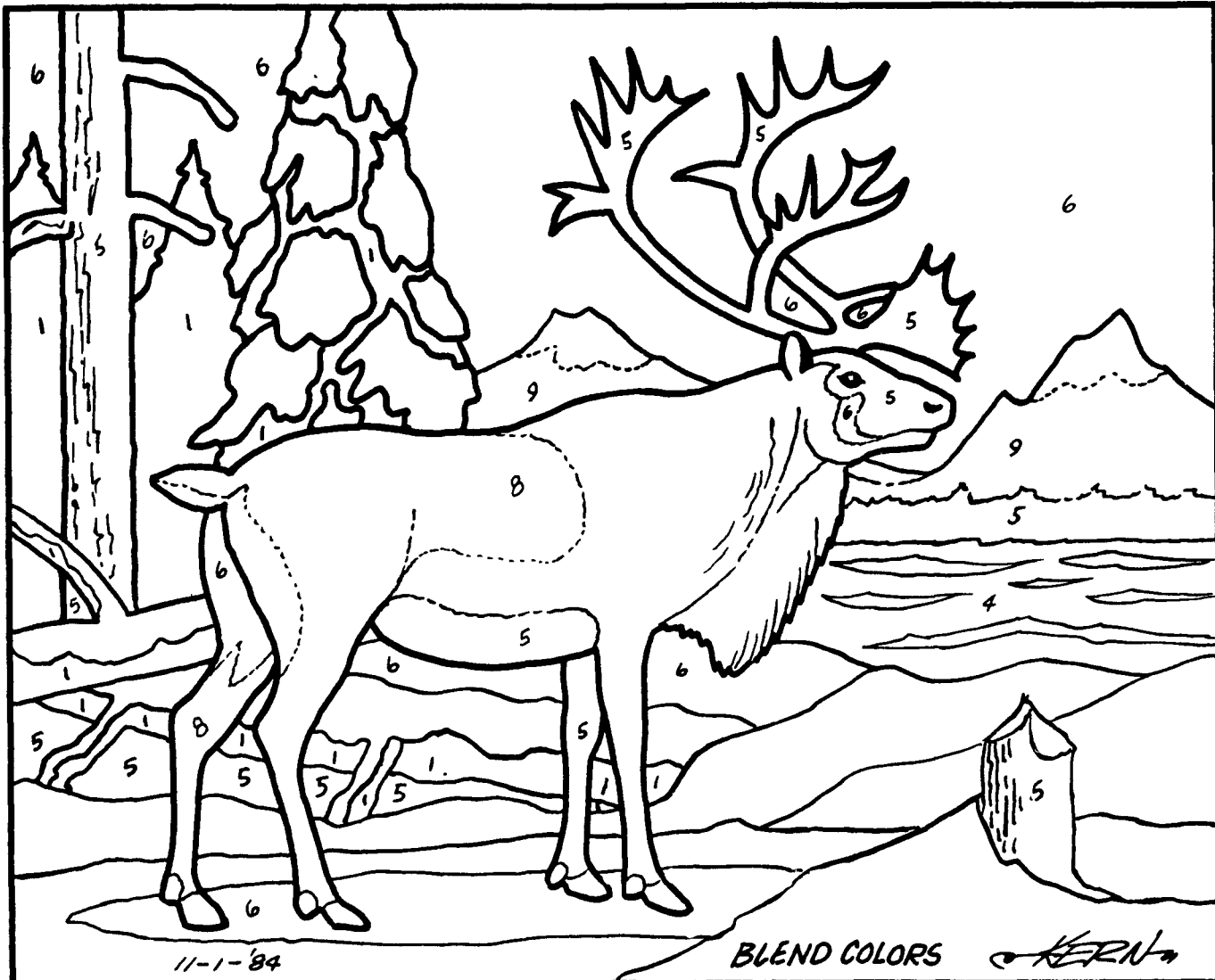


GIGANTIC SELECTION
IN
Lancaster Farming's
CLASSIFIEDS

COLOR THIS!

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1. BLACK | 6. PEACH |
| 2. RED | 7. GREEN |
| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT. BROWN |
| 4. BLUE | 9. LT. BLUE |
| 5. BROWN | 10. LT. GREEN |

CARIBOU IS THE FRENCH CANADIAN NAME FOR THIS WILD REINDEER OF NORTH AMERICA. CARIBOU ARE LARGER THAN DEER. THEY HAVE BROAD HOOFS TO SUPPORT THEM IN THE DEEP SNOW. THEY MOVE IN LARGE HERDS FAR ACROSS THE ARCTIC TUNDRA FROM NEW-FOUNDLAND TO ALASKA. SOME CARIBOU ARE 8 FT. LONG AND WEIGH MORE THAN 400 LBS.



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BLEND COLORS 