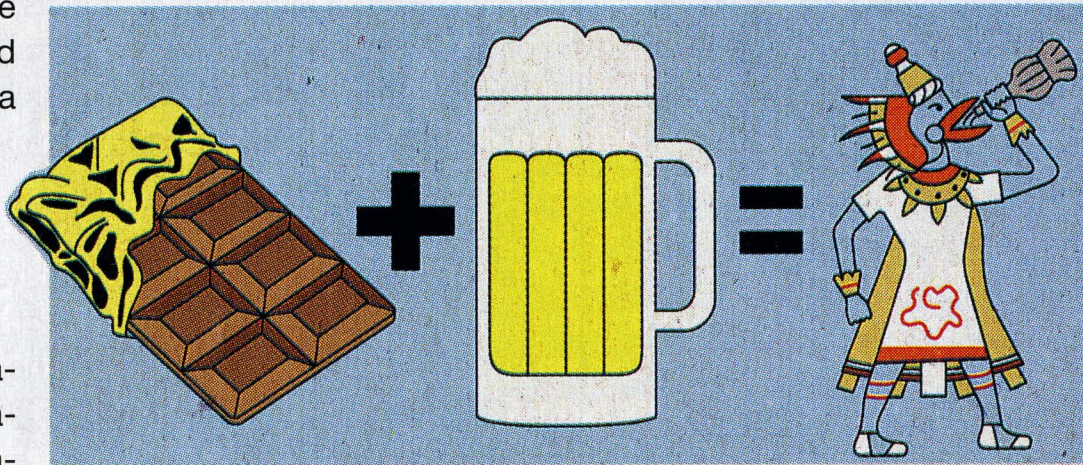


THE EARLIEST CHOCOHOOLICS

Not only were the first chocoholics tinkering with cacao around 1100 B.C.—500 years earlier than previously thought—but they might have been doing so to get a tipsy buzz. A recent chemical analysis of 3,000-year-old pottery shards in northern Honduras turned up traces of theobromine (its name means “food of the gods”), a chemical that is found in cacao. The discovery is the oldest evidence of cacao manipulation. The ana-



lyzed vessel had a narrow spout, and the researchers speculate that the locals were imbibing a winelike drink made by fermenting the pulp that surrounds the seeds of the cacao plant. In contrast, the nonalcoholic concoction favored by Aztecs some 2,000 years later was prepared in wide-lipped jugs, and the liquid

was poured back and forth to create froth.

Beer enthusiasts can look forward to a loose re-creation of the ancient brew sometime this year. Dogfish Head Craft Brewery in Delaware is producing a drink based on the original recipe, with the help of biomolecular archaeologist

Patrick McGovern of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, who aided in the Honduran study. “We tweaked the recipe, adding hops for the modern palate,” says Sam Calagione, Dogfish Head founder and president, “but I still think of it as a liquid time capsule.”

Clara Moskowitz