

## The Chocolate Egg Cream

THE CHOCOLATE EGG CREAM is a beverage dating back possibly as far as the 1890s. It would be an injustice to call it a chocolate soda. It's a cold, fizzy, frothy, silky chocolate experience.

Its origins are obscure. One theory (propounded by the Auster family) is that it was created by Louis Auster at his candy store in lower Manhattan. According to this story, a Yiddish actor remarked that Auster's drink was better than a similar drink called "chocolat et crème" the actor had tried in Paris, and the phrase "chocolat et crème" was corrupted to "chocolate egg cream". Another theory (propounded by a Fredkin descendant) is that the drink was invented by Hymie Fredkin at his Manhattan candy store. According to this theory, the original drink contained chocolate syrup, ice cream, an egg and milk and was called "Uncle Hymie's egg cream". When the ingredients became expensive



during the Great Depression, the drink was modified to its current form, which employs seltzer water, milk and chocolate syrup — but neither egg nor cream.

The chocolate egg cream was perhaps an inevitable invention. Eastern European immigrants in New York brought a tradition of drinking seltzer water (the "champagne of the proletariat"). It was common for someone to order "two cents plain", meaning a cold glass of plain seltzer costing two cents. A popular New York drink, promoted as healthy for children, was Dr. Brown's Celray Tonic, made by combining celery seed, sugar and seltzer. Elsewhere, seltzer was combined with various kinds of syrups to make "phosphates", especially lime and cherry phosphates. A chocolate phosphate was simply chocolate syrup and seltzer.

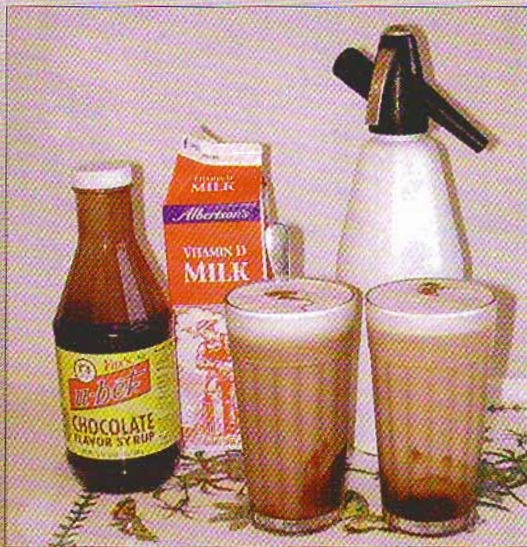
The chocolate egg cream became popular throughout New York City, especially in Jewish neighborhoods. Immigrants living in crowded tenements



and sweltering in the summer heat would congregate on the street near the local candy store and drink cold chocolate egg creams. It was easy to make so hundreds of people could be served in an evening

In its heyday, the drink spread as far as Philadelphia, and its popularity lasted through the 1950s. Why did the chocolate egg cream decline in popularity in the 1950s? It probably fell victim to the convenience of bottled and canned soft drinks and the automatic soda dispenser, which eliminated the need for a soda jerk to mix syrup and seltzer.

Today, there is a chocolate egg cream revival. You can find recipes for white chocolate egg creams



light brown middle and at least an inch of pure white foam on the top.

and other "nouveau" creations but, to an aficionado, nothing is acceptable but brown chocolate egg creams made with Fox's U-bet Chocolate Flavor Syrup. This syrup has been manufactured since the early 1900s though the name U-bet dates from the late 1920s.

There seems to be consensus that the perfect chocolate egg cream is as cold as possible, served in a straight, tall glass or a Coke glass (with the bulging top), made with whole milk and the fizziest seltzer available (and never with club soda). It should have a dark brown bottom,

—JOHN M. HOENIG