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Comprehensive evaluation of phenolic profile in dark chocolate and dark chocolate enriched with Sakura green tea leaves or turmeric powder

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1 **Abstract**

2 Recently, a huge number of studies have confirmed the important role of chocolate polyphenols in 3 human health, underlining its beneficial effects especially in the treatment of cardiovascular 4 diseases. However, a thorough evaluation of chocolate phenolic profile is still lacking. This study 5 aimed at a comprehensive characterisation of dark chocolate phenolic profile, using non-targeted 6 mass spectrometry identification. This approach allowed a tentative identification of 158 individual 7 phenolic compounds: 67 were newly detected in dark chocolate, among these 38 were observed for 8 the first time in chocolate as well as in cocoa beans or products. Ellagitannins, which have never 9 been reported in cocoa or chocolate, represented about the 10% of the phenolic profile of dark 10 chocolate. The enrichment of dark chocolate with Sakura green tea leaves or turmeric powder 11 influenced and modified the phenolic profile, resulting in a phenolic concentration increase. In this 12 way, this functional chocolate might maximize the beneficial effect of chocolate consumption, 13 combining the positive health effects of chocolate, turmeric and green tea and, at the same time, 14 reducing the amount of sugars and calories introduced with chocolate.

15

16 **Keywords:** epicatechin, curcuminoids, ellagitannins, mass spectrometry, polyphenols,

17 metabolomics, functional foods

18 **1. Introduction**

19 Western lifestyle built-around a highly refined diet rich in saturated fat and sugars but low in 20 complex plant carbohydrates, phytochemicals and vitamins is a hot research topic in the field of 21 nutrition. It is widely known that diet is the cause of many pathogenic age-related conditions. The 22 intake of certain dietary components is plays an essential role in the prevention or management of 23 these diseases (Del Rio et al., 2013). Increasing interest has pointed to naturally occurring 24 compounds, which have been considered non-nutritive for a long time. Polyphenols are a 25 representative class of these compounds and can be summarised into several groups, i.e. 26 hydroxybenzoic acids, hydroxycinnamic acids, flavan-3-ols, flavonols, flavones, flavanones, 27 isoflavones, anthocyanins, ellagitannins, stilbenes, and lignan. They occur in all fruits, vegetables, 28 nuts, seeds, flowers, bark, beverages and processed food. As reviewed by Wollgast, & Anklam 29 (2000a; 2000b) polyphenols are characterised by several beneficial effects including anti-30 carcinogenic, anti-atherogenic, anti-inflammatory, immunomodulating and vasodilatory activities. 31 They can exert their protective effects through several mechanisms such as plasma cholesterol 32 reduction, modulation of lipid and lipoprotein metabolism, modulation of enzymes (phase I and 33 phase II) and apoptosis as well as their activity against reactive oxygen species (Del Rio et al., 34 2013).

35 Cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*) is known as a rich source of dietary phenolic compounds. Cocoa-derived 36 products such as dark chocolate are widely studied for their beneficial effects ascribed to 37 polyphenols. There is good evidence to suggest that cocoa derived polyphenols may have beneficial 38 effects on cardiovascular disease risk factors (Del Rio et al., 2013). Short-term dark chocolate 39 intake has been shown to reduce blood pressure in hypertensive subjects, to improve endothelial 40 function and insulin resistance as well as to inhibit platelet activation (Del Rio et al., 2013). As 41 reported by Rusconi, & Conti (2010), cocoa beans are characterised by phenolic compounds of the 42 flavan-3-ol group (catechin, epicatechin, gallocatechin and epigallocatechin) comprising oligomeric

3

43 procyanidins, anthocyanins (cyanidin glycosides) and flavonol glycosides such as quercetin-3-*O*-44 rutinoside, quercetin-3-*O*-arabinoside, quercetin-3-*O*-glucoside, quercetin-3-*O*-glucuronide and 45 quercetin (Sanbongi et al., 1998). So far, only few studies have investigated the phenolic 46 composition of dark chocolate, focusing on flavan-3-ols as the major class in chocolate phenolic 47 profile (Ortega et al., 2008; Wollgast, & Anklam, 2000a). This lack of information is also due to the 48 great interest addressed to the study of phenolic profile of cocoa, intended as raw material in 49 chocolate production, without considering the impact of processing temperature, microbial 50 fermentation or oxidative phenomena on the phenolics structure during cocoa processing in 51 chocolate production. The majority of published researches were aimed at analyzing the impact of 52 processing on the polyphenol content and antioxidant properties of cocoa more than that of 53 chocolate (Di Mattia, Sacchetti, Mastrocola, & Serafini, 2017; Dorota, Oracz, Sosnowska, & 54 Nebesny, 2016). Concerning this, it was considered purposeful to investigate the comprehensive 55 phenolic profile of commercial dark chocolate (70%), using an un-targeted mass spectrometry 56 approach, in order to fill the gap of information about dark chocolate phenolic composition. Finally, 57 the last task was to evaluate a possible polyphenolic enrichment of dark chocolate recipe, by adding 58 widely studied polyphenol-rich ingredients (Sakura green tea leaves and turmeric powder) in order 59 to obtain potential functional food, which can combine the above-mentioned chocolate properties 60 and those of green tea leaves and turmeric powder (Del Rio et al., 2013; Kunnumakkara et al., 61 2017).

62 Therefore, the aim of the present study was to identify, quantify and compare phenolic compounds 63 from three different types of dark chocolate using liquid chromatography-electrospray ionization 64 mass spectrometry (LC-ESI-QTOF-MS/MS).

65 **2. Materials and methods**

66 *2.1. Materials*

67 Phenolic compounds standard, 6-hydroxy-2,5,7,8-tetramethylchroman-2-carboxylic acid (trolox),

- 68 2,2'-azino-bis(3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic acid) (ABTS*),* 2,4,6-tri(2-pyridyl)-S-triazine
- 69 (TPTZ), Folin-Ciocalteau phenol reagent were purchased from Sigma (Milan, Italy). Methanol and
- 70 formic acid were obtained from Carlo Erba (Milan, Italy). Three different types of chocolate (dark
- 71 70% cocoa (DC), dark 70% cocoa and 8% turmeric (TDC), dark 70% cocoa and 2% Sakura green
- 72 tea (GTDC)) were bought from a local shop in Modena (Italy).
- 73

74 *2.2. Extraction of phenolic compounds*

75 Polyphenols were extracted as reported in Martini, Conte, & Tagliazucchi (2017) with minor 76 modifications. Ten grams of chocolate were melted at 50°C for 10 minutes and homogenized with 77 20 mL of water/methanol/formic acid solution (28:70:2, v/v/v). The mixtures were stirred and 78 maintained at 37°C for 30 minutes. The homogenates were centrifuged (5000 rpm, 10 min, 4°C), 79 after that the floating cocoa butter layers were removed and the supernatants collected. Pellets were 80 then used for a second extraction step with acetone. Each pellet was added with 20 mL of acetone, 81 kept in agitation at 37°C, for 30 minutes and then centrifuged for 20 minutes at 5000 rpm, 4°C. The 82 supernatants were collected. Both methanol and acetone extractions were performed twice. The 83 methanolic and acetone extracts were diluted 8 and 2 times, respectively, using MilliQ water and 84 further used for the MS analysis.

85

86 *2.3. Identification and quantification of phenolic compounds by liquid chromatography mass* 87 *spectrometry (LC-ESI-QTOF-MS/MS)*

88 Chocolate methanolic and acetone extracts were analysed on Agilent HPLC 1200 Infinity (Agilent 89 Technologies, Santa Clara, CA) equipped with a C18 column (HxSil C18 Reversed phase, 250×4.6

90 mm, 5 μm particle size, Hamilton Company, Reno, Nevada, USA). The mobile phase consisted of 91 (A) H2O/formic acid (99:1, v/v) and (B) acetonitrile/formic acid (99:1, v/v). The gradient started at 92 4% B for 0.5 min then linearly ramped up to 30% B in 60 min. The mobile phase composition was 93 raised up to 100% B in 1 min and maintained for 5 min in order to wash the column before 94 returning to the initial condition. The flow rate was set at 1 mL/min. The chocolate extracts were 95 injected in the amount of 20 µL. After passing to the column, the eluate was split, and 0.3 mL/min 96 was direct to a 6520 accurate-mass Q-TOF mass spectrometer (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, 97 CA). Identification of phenolic compounds in all samples was carried out using full scan, data-98 dependent $MS²$ scanning from m/z 100 to 1700 and selected reaction monitoring. MS operating 99 conditions (negative mode) were: a capillary temperature of 350°C, a dry gas flow rate of 10 L/min, 100 a nebulizer pressure of 35 psi, potential of the ESI source, 3.5 kV. 101 The quantification of single phenolic compounds was carried out by integrating the area under the 102 peak from the extracted ion chromatograms (EICs). To obtain an accurate quantification the EICs 103 were obtained by centering a narrow mass window (± 5 ppm) on the theoretical *m/z* value of each 104 phenolic compound. For each standard compound, the calibration curve was built using seven 105 concentration points in the range of 0.2-50 ng. Hydroxycinnamic acids, hydroxybenzoic acids, 106 flavan-3-ols and ellagitannins were quantified as *p*-coumaric or ferulic acid, protocatechuic acid, (- 107)-epicatechin and ellagic acid equivalents, respectively. Flavonols and flavones were quantified as 108 quercetin-3-rutinoside equivalents. Finally, curcuminoids were quantified as curcumin equivalent. 109 Quantitative results were expressed as mg of compounds per 100 g of chocolate. Calibration curve 110 equations, linearity ranges and limit of quantification (LOQ) for the different standards are given in 111 supplementary materials (**Table S1**). Folin-Ciocalteau assay was also performed to quantify the 112 total phenolic compounds as reported by Singleton, Orthofer, & Lamuela-Raventós (1999). The 113 results were expressed as mg of gallic acid per 100 g of chocolate.

114

115 *2.4. Antioxidant activity assays*

116 The antioxidant properties of chocolate were evaluated performing two different assays. The ABTS 117 (2,2'-azino-bis (3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic acid) and ferric reducing power (FRAP) assays 118 were performed according to the protocols described by Re et al. (1999) and Benzie, & Strain 119 (1996), respectively. The ABTS scavenging capacity and FRAP value were expressed as mmol of 120 trolox equivalent per 100 g of chocolate, by means of a calibration curve obtained with Trolox 50- 121 500 µmol/L, in the same assay conditions. The absorbances were read using a Jasco V-550 UV/Vis 122 spectrophotometer (Orlando, FL, USA). 123

124 *2.5. Statistic*

125 All data are presented as mean \pm SD for three replicates for each prepared sample. One-way 126 analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) with Tukey's post-hoc test was applied using Graph Pad 127 prism 6.0 (GraphPad software, San Diego, CA, U.S.A.). The differences were considered 128 significant with *P<0.05.*

129 **3. Result and discussion**

130 *3.1. Non-targeted LC-MS profiling of phenolic compounds in different types of dark chocolate* 131 This study aimed to identify and quantify the phenolic profile and content of three different types of 132 dark chocolate (dark chocolate 70% cocoa, dark chocolate 70% cocoa and 8% turmeric, dark 133 chocolate 70% cocoa and 2% Sakura green tea). The phytochemical composition focused on the 134 phenolic fraction, was investigated using a non-targeted procedure through LC-ESI-MS/MS 135 experiments, representative base peak chromatograms (BPCs) are shown in **Figure 1**. Within the 37 136 resolved peaks, 158 individual phenolic compounds were tentatively identified. Among them, 67 137 were firstly identified in dark chocolate and of these 38 were identified for the first time in 138 chocolate, cocoa beans and cocoa products. The structure of the newly identified phenolic 139 compounds is depicted in **Figure 2**. Peaks annotated with letters from **a** to **g** in **Figure 1** did not 140 contain phenolic compounds and were not further investigated in this study. Two additional non-141 phenolic compounds were recognised in peaks **28** and **30** and identified as 12-hydroxy jasmonic 142 acid sulphate as already described in raw fermented cocoa beans by Patras, Milev, Vrancken, & 143 Kuhnert (2014). The description of the non-phenolic compounds is reported in supplementary 144 material (**Table S2**). **Table 1**, instead, shows mass spectrum data along with peak assignments and 145 retention time for the identified phenolic compounds. A total of 16 compounds were identified by 146 comparison with authentic standards. The remaining compounds were tentatively identified based 147 on the interpretation of their fragmentation patterns obtained from $MS²$ experiments and by 148 comparison with literature. The description of the MS fragmentation pattern of phenolic compounds 149 already identified in cocoa beans or products will not be further described. All identified 150 compounds were found in the methanol extract. The subsequent extraction of the pellet with 151 acetone did not resulted in the recovery of new compounds. The acetone extract just contained low 152 amount of the same compounds found in methanol extract (data not shown).

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154

155 *3.1.1. Flavan-3-ols and derivatives*

156 The high-resolution mass-spectrometry method used in this study enabled the characterization of 72

157 flavan-3-ol derivatives. According to their chemical structures, this group may be divided into

- 158 monomeric forms, A-type, and B-type oligomeric forms.
- 159 Among the monomeric flavan-3-ols, four compounds had been already reported in dark chocolate 160 (compounds 9.1, 13.2, 15.2 and 19.9) (Wollgast, 2004), seven compounds had been detected in
- 161 cocoa beans or products but not in dark chocolate (compounds 13.1, 14.1, 15.1, 16.2 , 21.4, 22.6
- 162 and 25.3) (D'Souza et al., 2017; Patras et al., 2014), whereas seven compounds were newly
- 163 identified in both dark chocolate and cocoa beans or products. Gallocatechin-3-*O*-hexoside (*m/z*
- 164 467.1270; compound 10.1) and epigallocatechin-3-*O*-hexoside (*m/z* 467.1270; compound 11.1)

165 were tentatively identified since they gave $MS²$ major product ion at m/z 305, displaying typical

166 hexosyl group loss (162 amu) (Jiang et al., 2013). Otherwise, (epi)catechin-*C*-pentoside isomer

(compound 20.3) has been ascribed to the deprotonated ion [M−H]- 167 ion at *m/z* 421.1223, yielding

168 major MS² fragment ions at m/z 361 and m/z 331, corresponding to the loss of 60 and 90 amu (i.e.

169 *C*-pentosyl moiety) (Hvattum, & Ekeberg, 2003). Compounds 23.6, 26.2 and 27.5, *m/z* 415.1111,

170 were speculated to be isomers of (epi)catechin trihydroxybenzene, since the difference between the

171 precursor ion (*m/z* 415) and its major product ion (*m/z* 289, i.e. (epi)catechin-aglycone) was 126

172 amu, indicating the typical loss of a trihydroxybenzene moiety and the MS² fragmentation spectra

173 showed typical (epi)catechin fragmentation pattern (Table 1) with MS² fragment ions at m/z 245,

174 205 and 125. The presence of distinctive MS² product ions at m/z 259 (compounds 23.6 and 26.2;

175 deprotonated aglycone -30 amu, [Y₀-2H-CO]⁻) and m/z 261 (compound 27.5; deprotonated

176 aglycone-28 amu, $[Y_0$ -CO] $]$ were observed, distinguishing the two different *O*-binding sites, 3-*O*

177 and 7-*O*, respectively (Hvattum, & Ekeberg, 2003). Compounds 27.6 and 34.6 with negative

¹⁷⁸ charged [M-H]⁻ ion at m/z 617.1413 gave product ions in the MS² spectra at m/z 465 ([M-H]⁻ -152

- 204 glycosides have been already isolated from chocolate and cocoa (Hatano et al. 2002). Dimeric
- 205 (compounds 21.3, 22.2, 23.7, 24.3, 30.2, 31.1, 31.5, 32.2 and 34.1), trimeric (compounds 20.8, 24.4
- 206 and 24.9), tetrameric (compounds 19.6, 22.1, 22.7 and 24.1) and hexameric (compound 22.9)
- 207 structures of A-type procyanidins were also found and listed in **Table 1.**
- 208

209 *3.1.2 Hydroxycinnamic acids*

210 A total of 25 hydroxycinnamic acids were tentatively identified. Among these, three compounds 211 (compounds 2.1, 23.4 and 27.2) had never been identified in dark chocolate and cocoa beans or 212 products, whereas compound 20.4 had been already detected in cocoa but never in dark chocolate 213 (Stark, & Hofmann, 2005). According to Bauer, Harbaum-Piayda, & Schwarz (2012), the precursor 214 ion at m/z 325.1004 can be tentatively classified as ferulic acid-4-O-pentoside, which MS² yielded a 215 major fragment ion at *m/z* 193, corresponding to the loss of pentose ([M-H] – 132 amu). Using the 216 fragmentation pattern and literature comparison, di-hydro-caffeic acid (compound 2.1) and di-217 hydro-coumaric acid (compound 23.4) were tentatively ascribed to deprotonated ions 181.0575 and 218 165.0470, respectively (Bresciani et al., 2017). These two compounds can be originated from the 219 microbial metabolism during cocoa beans fermentation. Finally, compounds 12.3, 14.3, 19.4 and 220 $\,$ 20.2 (**Table 1**), with negative charged ion ([M-H]⁻) at m/z 337.1006, were only detected in 221 chocolate with added Sakura green tea leaves **(Table 1**). Based on their fragmentation pattern, 222 elution profile and in comparison with the scheme proposed by Clifford, Johnston, Knight, $\&$ 223 Kuhnert (2003), they had been tentatively classified as coumaroyl-quinic acids (Martini et al., 224 2017).

225

227 A tentatively characterization of 22 flavonols, 6 flavones and 7 other phenolics has been enabled 228 thanks to LC-ESI-MS/MS experiments. Among these, 15 compounds were identified for the first 229 time in chocolate and cocoa beans or products.

- 230
- 231 *3.1.3.1. Flavonols and derivative forms*

232 According to MS and MS/MS data, the elution profile and literature (Andres-Lacueva et al., 2008; 233 Counet, Callemien, & Collin 2006; Ortega et al., 2008; Sanbongi et al., 1998; Wollgast, 2004), four 234 flavonols already reported in chocolate and cocoa beans or products were identified as quercetin at 235 *m/z* 301.0423 (compound 35.1) and its pentoside at *m/z* 433.0832 (compound 33.2) and hexoside at 236 *m/z* 463.0950 (compounds 30.1 and 31.3) derivatives. Concerning flavonols *O*-glycosides, 237 compounds 32.4, 34.3 and 34.5 had been already detected in cocoa but never in dark chocolate 238 (Ortega et al., 2008; Sánchez-Rabaneda et al., 2003) and were tentatively ascribed to kaempferol-3- 239 *O*-hexoside isomers and quercetin-3-*O*-rhamnoside. Two quercetin derivatives, quercetin-7-*O*-240 rhamnoside-3-*O*-rutinoside and quercetin-7-*O*-hexoside-3-*O*-rutinoside isomers (*m/z* 755.2103 and 241 771.2042, respectively; compounds 27.4, 25.2 and 26.3) were detected for the first time in dark 242 chocolate and cocoa beans or products by tentatively identification, screening the fragmentation 243 pattern (**Table 1**) (Guimarães et al., 2013; Lin, Chen, & Harnly, 2008). Compound 27.4 with a [M– 244 H][–] deprotonated ion at m/z 755.2103 and MS² fragment ions at m/z 609 (quercetin-3-*O*-rutinoside, 245 by loss of rhamnose moiety, 146 amu), 301 (quercetin-aglycone, underlining the loss of a rutinose 246 moiety, 308 amu) was tentatively identified as quercetin-7-*O*-rhamnoside-3-*O*-rutinoside (Lin et al., 247 2008). Compound 25.2 and 26.3 with a [M–H][–] precursor ion at *m/z* 771.2042, producing product 248 ions at *m/z* 609 (loss of 162 mass units, a hexosyl-moiety), 463 (quercetin-3-*O*-glucoside, loss of 249 308 amu, a rutinose moiety) and 301 (quercetin-aglycone), and according to Martini et al. (2017), 250 were tentatively identified as quercetin-7-*O*-hexoside-3-*O*-rutinoside. As far as we know, also 251 compounds 31.4, 18.6, 32.1, 28.2, 31.2, 22.3 and 22.4 have been described for the first time in dark

277 aglycone, through the loss of 308 amu (rutinose moiety) and the loss of 162 amu (hexose group).

278 Concerning this, the compound was therefore tentatively identified as myricetin-7-*O*-hexoside-3-*O*-

rutinoside (Lin et al., 2008). Finally, compound 23.9 (**Table 1**), with negative precursor ion ([M-H]- 279

280) at *m/z* 625.1455, was only detected in chocolate with added Sakura green tea leaves **(Table 1**).

- 281 Basing on its fragmentation pattern (**Table 1**) and according to Lin et al. (2008) it had been
- 282 tentatively classified as myricetin-3-*O*-rutinoside.
- 283

284 *3.1.3.2. Flavones*

285 Six glycosylated apigenins were detected in dark chocolate (**Table 1**); among these, five apigenins 286 (compounds 19.8, 19.12, 22.10, 25.1 and 27.3) were newly detected in this study. Compound 27.3 287 was tentatively associated to apigenin*-C*-hexoside-*2′*′-*O-*rhamnoside isomer, *m/z* 577.1617, whose 288 MS² spectrum gave main fragment ions at m/z 457, 413 and 293, arising from the loss of 120 amu 289 (suggesting 1-2 linking between rhamnosyl-glucosyl group), 164 amu (rhamnosyl group), and 284 290 amu (164 plus 120 amu, i.e. rhamnose-glucosyl residue) (Dou, Lee, Tzen, & Lee, 2007; Hvattum, & 291 Ekeberg, 2003; Waridel et al., 2001). The next two isomers (compounds 19.8 and 19.12) at *m/z* 292 593.1591 were tentatively identified as *C*-diglycosylated apigenins; according to Jiang et al. (2013) 293 they were pinpointed as apigenin-6,8-di-*C*-glucoside isomers. Compound 25.1 generated the same 294 deprotonated ion at m/z 593.1591 and MS² fragment ions at m/z 473, 413 and 293 corresponding to 295 the loss of 120 amu (suggesting 1-2 linking between two glucosyl groups), 180 amu (glucosyl 296 moiety) and 300 amu (a glucose-glucosyl residue). Thus, compound 25.1 was speculated to be 297 apigenin-*C*-hexoside-2′′-*O*-hexoside isomer (Hvattum, & Ekeberg, 2003; Dou et al., 2007). Finally, following the scheme proposed by Lin et al. (2008) for the negative precursor ion [M-H]⁻ m/z 563.1462 and considering the losses of 90 amu ($MS²$ fragment at m/z 473) and 120 amu ($MS²$ 299 300 fragment at m/z 443) proving the existence of *C*-pentosyl- and *C*-hexosyl groups, compound 22.10 301 was tentatively identified as apigenin-*C*-hexoside-*C*-pentoside isomer.

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303 *3.1.3.3. Other phenolics*

304 Compounds 29.1 and 34.2, showing the same negative precursor ion [M-H]⁻ at m/z 451.1103, were 305 tentatively ascribed to cinchonain isomers, already detected in cocoa powder (Cádiz-Gurrea et al., 306 2014) but never before in dark chocolate. Four glycosidic forms of naringenin (compound 19.3), 307 eriodictyol (compounds 18.4 and 19.2) and phloretin (compound 32.3) were tentatively identified 308 for the first time in dark chocolate and cocoa products and listed in **Table 1**. Compound 19.3 at *m/z* 309 593.1591, was tentatively identified as naringeni*-C*-hexoside*-7-O*-hexoside isomer, confirmed by 310 the characteristic loss of 120 amu (*C*-glycosylation site) and 162 amu (*O*-glycosylation site) 311 from *m/z* 473 and 413, respectively, which pinpointed the presence of two hexose units attached to 312 the flavonoid aglycone in different positions (Hvattum, & Ekeberg, 2003; Waridel et al., 2001). The 313 7-*O*-glycosylation site was proved by the presence of MS² fragment ion at m/z 283. Compound 18.4 314 displayed deprotonated ion at m/z of 449.1169 and showed MS² major fragment ions at m/z 287 ([M−H]- 315 -162; i.e. hexose moiety loss) and *m/z* 259, confirming *7*-*O*-glycosylation site presence. 316 Based on these data, compound 18.4 was tentatively identified as eriodictyol-*7*-*O*-hexoside (De 317 Beer at al. 2012). Compound 19.2, characterized by the deprotonated ion at *m/z* 611.1662, gave MS² 318 major fragment ions at *m/z* 449, 329 (corresponding to the loss of 120 amu (*C*-hexoside) and 319 162 amu (*O*-hexoside), respectively), 287 (eriodyctiol-aglycone) and 259 (*7-O*-glycosylation site). 320 Therefore, compound 19.2 was speculated to be eriodictiol-*C*-hexoside-*7*-*O*-hexoside isomer (De 321 Beer at al. 2012; Hvattum, & Ekeberg, 2003). The negative ionization mode of compound 32.3 322 exhibited a [M-H]⁻ precursor ion at m/z 435.1376, with MS² product ions at m/z 345 and 315, losing 323 90 and 120 amu, respectively. This fragmentation pattern has been previously described for 324 phloretin*-C*-hexoside isomer (Kazuno, Yanagida, Shindo, & Murayama, 2005).

325

326 *3.1.4. Ellagitannins*

327 Ellagitannins are known as polymeric structures including different numbers of galloyl and 328 hexahydroxydiphenoyl (HHDP) units esterified with glucose. Three ellagitannins were detected for 329 the first time in cocoa. They were distinguished by their characteristic fragment ion spectra yielding 330 sequential losses of galloyl (152 amu), gallate (170 amu), and HHDP residues (301 amu). 331 Following the ellagitannins fragmentation scheme pattern proposed by Mena et al. (2012), 332 compounds 16.5 (*m/z* 633.0796) and 37.1 (*m/z* 301.0054) can be tentatively identified as HHDP-333 galloyl-hexose and ellagic acid, respectively. The ellagic acid was also confirmed by comparison 334 with the retention time of the standard and the $MS²$ spectrum. Compound 27.1, characterized by the 335 deprotonated ion at m/z 615.0723 and MS² fragment ions at m/z 463, due to the loss of a galloyl 336 group from ([M–H]⁻-152) and at *m/z* 301, due to the loss of one hexose moiety (162 amu), was 337 tentatively identified as ellagic acid-galloyl-hexoside (Teixeira, Bertoldi, Lajolo, Mariko, & 338 Hassimotto, 2015)

339

340 *3.1.5. Hydroxybenzoic acids*

341 A total of twenty hydroxybenzoic acids and derivatives were detected in this study. Three of these 342 (compounds 8.4, 9.2 and 9.3) were tentatively identified for the first time in dark chocolate and 343 cocoa beans and products. Whereas 11 compounds (compounds 2.2, 5.1, 7.1, 8.1, 8.3, 9.4, 11.2, 344 13.4, 16.6, 16.7, 19.11) had been already identified in cocoa but never in dark chocolate (Ortega et 345 al., 2008). Compound 8.4 (m/z 315.0793) yielded MS² fragment ions at m/z 153 and 109, displaying 346 the hexose moiety loss and the presence of protocatechuic-aglycone. It was tentatively identified as 347 protocatechuic acid-4-*O*-hexoside (Martini et al., 2017). Compounds 9.2 and 9.3, *m/z* 359.1073, 348 fragmented in the MS² experiments giving major product ions at m/z 197, 182 and 153, suggesting 349 the presence of a syringic acid residue. The loss of 162 amu, proved by $MS²$ fragment ion at m/z 350 197, prompt us to tentatively identify this compound as syringic acid-4-*O*-hexoside.

351

352 *3.1.6. Curcuminoids*

353 From the extracts of turmeric dark chocolate sample, we detected the [M–H]⁻ precursor ions at m/z 354 307.1043, 337.1164, and 367.1257 (compounds 36.1, 36.2 and 36.3). As reported by Jiang, 355 Somogyi, Jacobsen, Timmermann, & Gang (2006), product ions at *m/z* 187 or 217 were the typical 356 fragment ions in the MS^2 spectra of deprotonated $[M-H]$ curcuminoids. In comparison to 357 fragmentation pattern proposed, compounds 36.1, 36.2 and 36.3 were tentatively identified as 358 bisdemethoxycurcumin, demethoxycurcumin and curcumin, respectively (**Table 1**).

359

360 *3.2. Phenolic compounds in chocolate*

361 **Table 2** provides information about the amount of the 158 tentatively identified phenolic 362 compounds in the different types of chocolate. In order to quantify the amount of total phenolic 363 compounds in chocolates, seven calibration curves were prepared with the available authentic 364 standards: epicatechin, coumaric and ferulic acids, quercetin-3-*O*-rutinoside, ellagic acid, 365 protocatechuic acid and curcumin. In all cases, the linearity was better than 0.99. The other 366 compounds, for which no commercial standards were available, were tentatively quantified using 367 the standards with similar structural characteristics and considering the functional groups that may 368 affect the ionisation properties. As shown in **Figure 3**, even if flavan-3-ols were the most 369 representative class in each type of chocolate, the phenolic profile is thoroughly influenced by the 370 addition of Sakura green tea or turmeric powder.

371

372 *3.2.1. Dark chocolate (DC) phenolic profile*

373 As determined by LC-MS/MS experiments, the total phenolic concentration in DC was 787.63 \pm 374 10.90 mg/100 g of chocolate, representing about 30.0% of total phenolic compounds determined 375 with the Folin-Ciocalteau assay $(2624.15 \pm 112.36 \text{ mg}/100 \text{ g}$ of chocolate). The ABTS radical 376 scavenging and Fe³⁺-reducing ability of DC (**Figure 4**) were tested (11.00 \pm 0.26 and 6.29 \pm 0.13 377 mmol trolox equivalents/100 g of chocolate, respectively) resulting in line with the findings 378 proposed by Batista et al. (2016). As reported by Wollgast & Anklam (2000a), catechins and 379 procyanidins represent more than 90% of phenolic profile of cocoa beans and cocoa-products. We 380 found out that total flavan-3-ols amount in DC was 503.76 ± 8.98 mg/100 g of chocolate 381 representing the 64.0% of total polyphenols identified by MS experiments. Considering monomeric 382 structures, epicatechin and catechin were the major represented flavan-3-ols, whose estimated 383 concentrations were higher than those reported so far (Gu et al., 2006). Epicatechin alone 384 represented the 40.4 % of total flavan-3-ols and the 25.8% of total phenolic identified by MS 385 experiments, resulting the most present compounds in DC. Large amounts of oligomeric structures 386 were also found, displaying a total concentration value of 166.28± 4.13 mg/100 g of chocolate and 387 reaching approximately 33.0% of flavan-3-ols class. Epicatechin has been causally linked to the 388 reported cardiovascular effects observed after the consumption of cocoa (Schroeter et al., 2006). 389 The ingestion of flavanol-rich cocoa in healthy adult males was associated with acute elevations in 390 levels of circulating nitric oxide, an enhanced flow-mediated dilation response of conduit arteries, 391 and an augmented microcirculation in humans and the results were repeatable with pure epicatechin 392 intake (70 mg/day; equivalent to 35-40 g of DC). Indeed, elderly men with a median epicatechin 393 intake of 22 mg/day (equivalent to 10-15 g of DC) had a 38% lower risk of cardiovascular disease 394 mortality than that of subjects with a median intake of 8 mg/day (Dower, Geleijnse, 395 Hollman, Soedamah-Muthu, & Kromhout, 2016). 396 The hydroxycinnamic acids made up about 20.6% of DC phenolic profile, among these ferulic acid,

397 di-hydroxycinnamic aspartate and coumaroyl aspartate were the main hydroxycinnamic acids

398 detected in DC. The largest contribution was given by ferulic acid, with a concentration of 61.23 \pm

399 3.74 mg/100 g of chocolate. Among the *N*-phenylpropenoyl-L-amino acids, clovamide or caffeoyl-

400 tyrosine, described for the first time in cocoa by Sanbongi et al. (1998), was the main representative

401 with total concentration of its two isomers of 9.54 ± 0.54 mg/100 g of chocolate. Previous studies

402 found that clovamide exhibited antiradical properties (Locatelli et al., 2013; Sanbongi et al., 1998), 403 neuroprotective effects (Fallarini et al., 2009) and anti-inflammatory properties (Zeng et al., 2011). 404 Ellagitannins, which were identified for the first time in dark chocolate and cocoa in this study, 405 made up about 10% of DC phenolic profile. The higher amount was ascribed to ellagic acid (56.16 406 \pm 3.58 mg/100 g of chocolate), followed by HHDP-galloyl-hexoside (15.79 \pm 1.20 mg/100 g of 407 chocolate). Ellagic acid and ellagitannins can be metabolized by human microbiota in urolithins, 408 which are responsible for the health effects attributed to the consumption of ellagic acid and 409 ellagitannins-rich food (Tomás-Barberán et al., 2017).

410

411 *3.2.2. Sakura green tea dark chocolate (GTDC) phenolic profile*

412 The content of total polyphenolic compounds in GTDC displayed a significant increase (*P value* 413 ≤ 0.001) in respect to that of DC, recording a total concentration value of 1035.45 \pm 14.81 mg/100 g 414 of chocolate (**Figure 3**). This value represented the 30.3% of total phenolic compounds determined 415 with the Folin-Ciocalteau assay $(3417.81 \pm 229.45 \text{ mg}/100 \text{ g}$ of chocolate). The increased phenolic 416 concentration resulted in increased antioxidant properties in comparison with DC, which gave rise 417 to 40% and 144% enhancements of GTDC ABTS radical scavenging and ferric-reducing power, 418 respectively (**Figure 4**). The major phenolics in GTDC were still flavan-3-ols accounting for about 419 70.1% of total phenolic compounds, displaying a concentration value of 726.03 ± 14.53 mg/100 g 420 of chocolate, significantly different from DC flavan-3-ols content (503.76 ± 8.98 mg/100 g of 421 chocolate*, P value* <0.001). This flavan-3-ols increase was related to the Sakura green tea leaves 422 enrichment of dark chocolate formulation and was clearly reflected in the significant increase in 423 epicatechin (303.69 ± 11.65 mg/100 g of chocolate*, P value* <0.001, detailing about 30% of GTDC 424 phenolic profile), epigallocatechin (29.76 ± 1.74 mg/100 g of chocolate*, P value* <0.001) and total 425 procyanidins (230.76 ± 15.73 mg/100 g of chocolate*, P value* <0.001). The Sakura green tea 426 contribution was also confirmed by the presence of typical green tea gallate flavan-3-ols, especially 427 epigallocatechin gallate, showing a remarkable concentration value of 33.54 ± 2.16 mg/100 g of 428 chocolate. The hydroxycinnamic acids were still the second most representative class of phenolic 429 profile in GTDC, explaining about 15.3% of GTDC phenolic profile (**Figure 2**). Ellagitannins 430 showed a significant content increasing in GTDC respect to DC (89.12 \pm 1.50 mg/100 g of 431 chocolate, *P value* <0.001) with an incidence rate of 8.6%. These results may confirm a possible 432 polyphenols enrichment of dark chocolate profile which can lead to a potential combination of the 433 positive health effects and properties derived from both chocolate and green tea. LC-MS 434 experiments showed that GTDC contained 49% more epicatechin and 43% more flavan-3-ols than 435 DC. This can result in a lower intake to achieve the same biological effects. This seems a promising 436 way to maximise the potential beneficial effect of epicatechin consumption, contemporaneously 437 reducing the amount of sugars and calories introduced with chocolate.

438

439 *3.2.3. Turmeric dark chocolate (TDC) phenolic profile*

440 The TDC phenolic amount showed a significant increase (*P value* <0.001) respect to that of DC 441 which recorded a total concentration value of 1094.03 ± 10.15 mg/100 g of chocolate (**Figure 3**), 442 representing about 36% of total phenolic compounds assayed with the Folin-Ciocalteau method 443 (3043.81 \pm 294.64 mg/100 g of chocolate). Despite that, single phenolic classes did not show a 444 significant and remarkable increase respect to those of DC. This higher concentration can be 445 ascribed to turmeric powder contribution as well as the related curcuminoids, which accounted for 446 about 25% of TDC total phenolic profile, displaying a concentration value of 272.73 ± 2.58 mg/100 447 g of chocolate (**Figure 3**). ABTS radical scavenging ability and ferric-reducing power were tested, 448 resulting in 12.30 ± 0.27 and 10.57 ± 0.2 mmol trolox equivalents/100 g of chocolate, respectively **449** (**Figure 4**). Bisdemethoxycurcumin was the most concentrated curcuminoid (115.55 \pm 2.16 mg/100) 450 g of chocolate), followed by demethoxycurcumin $(82.64 \pm 1.33 \text{ mg}/100 \text{ g}$ of chocolate) which are 451 considered to be curcumin natural analogues and were reported to have a similar biological activity

452 to curcumin itself (Kocaadam, & Şanlier, 2017). Curcumin was found at the lowest concentration of 453 74.55 ± 0.47 mg/100 g of chocolate. Normally, curcumin is present at a concentration higher or 454 similar to the demethoxylated analogue (Jayaprakasha, Rhao, & Sakariah, 2002). Since the phenolic 455 composition of spices (and of vegetable food in general) is greatly variable depending on the 456 cultivar and agro-climatic factors (such as growing, harvesting time, seasonal variability) as well as 457 technological processes, it is plausible that different turmeric powder preparation had different 458 phenolic composition. Moreover, in the case of dark chocolate enriched with turmeric powder a 459 possible food matrix effect should be considered since some macromolecules such as proteins and 460 polysaccharide may interact with curcuminoids reducing their extractability. It is important also to 461 note that only free and extractable phenolic compounds were considered and analysed in this study. 462 Curcuminoids are widely known for their healthy properties such as anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, 463 antimicrobial, anticoagulant, anticancer and antimutagenic properties (Kocaadam, & Şanlier, 2017; 464 Kunnumakkara et al., 2017). To date, over 100 different clinical trials have been successfully 465 carried out, showing their safety, tolerability and effectiveness against several chronic diseases in 466 humans such as various types of cancers, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular and neurological diseases 467 (Kunnumakkara et al., 2017). Finally, the synergistic behaviour displayed by curcuminoids with 468 other nutraceuticals such as catechins and quercetin, resulting an increased effect against oxidative 469 stress in normal healthy adults, was demonstrated (Dominiak, McKinney, Heilbrun, & Sarkar, 470 2010). Therefore, an enhanced and strengthened health effect because of the union of polyphenol-471 rich sources, combining the positive effects of dark chocolate phenolics and turmeric curcuminoids, 472 can be speculated.

473

474 **4. Conclusions**

475 Literature provides a lot of information about cocoa polyphenols and properties, but there is still a 476 big gap about the phenolic composition of chocolate. Few studies investigated the phenolic

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477 composition of dark chocolate, focusing on flavan-3-ols as the major class in chocolate phenolic 478 profile. The purpose of this study was to overcome this lack of information, providing an accurate 479 and comprehensive characterisation of the phenolic profile of dark chocolate (70%). The 480 quantitative metabolomics approach used in this study allowed a tentative identification of 158 481 individual phenolic compounds in dark chocolate. Among the detected compounds, 67 have been 482 reported for the first time in dark chocolate, 38 of whom were identified for the first time in 483 chocolate, cocoa beans and cocoa products. This characterization extends the current knowledge on 484 the phytochemistry of dark chocolate and is, to our knowledge, the broadest profiling of its phenolic 485 compounds to date.

486 Results reported in this study also showed that the addition of Sakura green tea leaves or turmeric 487 powder influenced and modified the phenolic profile of dark chocolate, resulting in a phenolic 488 concentration increase. Mass spectrometry confirmed that this increase was strictly connected to the 489 food matrix, showing typical compounds belonging to green tea and turmeric. In this way, this 490 functional chocolate might maximize the potential beneficial effect of polyphenols-rich food 491 consumption and, at the same time, reducing the amount of sugars and calories introduced with 492 chocolate, resulting in a lower intake to achieve the same biological effects. This work may revise 493 the concept of "optimal" dose of chocolate in the context of a balanced diet, which optimizes the 494 functional properties by avoiding potential side effects, such as high-calorie intake.

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Figure captions

Figure 1. Representative negative ion mode base peak chromatograms (BPCs) of dark chocolate (A) green tea dark chocolate (B) and turmeric dark chocolate (C). The shown BPCs are representative of three independent experiments and represent the profile of the methanol extracts**.**

Figure 2. Structures of newly identified dark chocolate phenolic compounds. Examples of some newly identified phenolic structures belonging to flavan-3-ols (A), flavonols (B), hydroxybenzoic and hydroxycinnamic acids (C), flavones (D), flavanones (E) and dihydrochalcones (F). Gall: galloyl; gluc: glucuronide; hex: hexoside; pent: pentoside; rham: rhamnoside; rut: rutinoside; trihydroxy: trihydroxybenzene.

Figure 3. Occurrence of phenolic classes in dark chocolates. Global percentage of flavan-3-ols, flavonols, hydroxybenzoic and hydroxycinnamic acids, ellagitannins, flavones and other phenolics in dark chocolate and dark chocolate enriched with Sakura green tea leaves or turmeric powder. In brackets are reported the total amounts of phenolic compounds quantified with mass spectrometry. 70% means the total percentage of cocoa in the dark chocolates.

Figure 4. Antioxidant properties of dark chocolates. Antioxidant capacity (expressed as mmol trolox/100g of chocolate), measured by ABTS (A) and FRAP (B) assays. DC: dark chocolate; GTDC: dark chocolate enriched with Sakura green tea leaves; TDC: dark chocolate enriched with turmeric powder. Each sample was run in triplicate and results are reported as mean values ± SD. Values in the same graph with different lowercase letter are significantly different $(P < 0.05)$.

 R_4^2 R_2 R_3

 \mathbf{c}

T

a and **b** are referred to the compounds detected only in Sakura green tea dark chocolate or turmeric dark chocolate, respectively, whereas **s** means identification by comparison with authentic standard. **s** is referred to the compounds detected with authentic standards.

Table 2. Quantitative results (mg/100 g of chocolate) for phenolic compounds identified in the different types of chocolate. Values represent means ± standard deviation of triplicate determination.

isomer

isomer

n.d. means not detected; **<l.o.q.** means the compound was detected but it was below the limit of quantification; * and

** mean the compounds were detected only in green tea dark chocolate or turmeric dark chocolate, respectively. The data represent the sum of the quantities of a specific compound found in the methanol extract and in the subsequent acetone extract.

Different superscript letters within the same row indicate that the values are significantly different (*P<0.05*).

Flavan-3-ols as well as compounds 29.1 and 34.2 were quantified as epicatechin equivalent.

Hydroxycinnamic acids were quantified as coumaric acid equivalent except compounds 20.4, 27.2 and 30.3 which were quantified as ferulic acid equivalent.

Flavonols, flavones as well as compounds 18.4, 19.2, 19.3 and 32.3 were quantified as quercetin-3-*O*-rutinoside equivalent.

Ellagitannins were quantified as ellagic acid equivalent.

Hydroxybenzoic acids as well as compound 16.4 were quantified as protocatechuic acid equivalent.

Curcuminoids were quantified as curcumin equivalent.

The numbering of the compounds is referred to that used in **Table 1**.