

Delicious chocolate-alcohol confections provide an alluring 'adult' combination

By WENDY JOHNSON
Reporter

Food critic Bert Greene says chocolate is the most versatile flavor he knows. It blends with other flavors in creative ways.

Every chocolate lover has his favorite combination, some sumptuous, others outrageous. Consider these unlikely couplings. Sauerkraut added to chocolate cake batter gives the cake a coconut-like texture. Ditto with chocolate zucchini bread. Chocolate cakes made with tomato sauce are extra moist and fudgy. Fanatics even boast of chocolate chip bagels and chocolate potato chips.

Some of the more traditional combinations sound more appealing. How about chocolate and mint? The cool, crisp mint plays off of the warm, smooth chocolate to create an interesting union. Or chocolate and coffee? The slight edge of bitterness lends a rather "adult" touch to this blend.

Chocolate and alcohol is another "adult" combination. Think about eating a chocolate rum ball at Christmas, or biting into a liqueur-filled chocolate. The warm, spirited punch explodes on the tongue and is somehow smoothed by the chocolate. Chocolate can be combined with cognac, rum, whiskey and many flavored dessert liqueurs, such as Amaretto.

Mary Newton, owner of Prioriteas in College Station, says that of the several flavors of chocolate truffles her store carries, Amaretto is probably the most popular.

But European chocolates containing any alcohol other than small amounts of flavor extracts can't be imported to the United States. Consequently, says Gordon Young writing in National Geographic, we are missing out on some of the best

chocolate-alcohol confections made in Europe.

Many fruits combine naturally with chocolate. The tartness of oranges, for example, enhances the richness of chocolate. Raspberries and cranberries have the same effect, creating appealing color combinations as well. Chocolate has also been paired with bananas, pears, and prunes and other dried fruits.

Certain chocolate-fruit combinations are classic. The Black Forest cake is named in honor of the Black Forest region of Germany because that is the home of kirsch, the cherry brandy that gives it its characteristic flavor. The chocolate cake, fruit filling, and whipped topping all are laced with cherry flavoring.

And did you know that dipping spoonfuls of Wendy's Frosty in Dr. Pepper brings out the cherry flavor in the soda?

The famous Viennese Sacher torte owes much of its unique flavor to the apricot jam spread between its layers and just beneath its dark chocolate icing. It was created in 1832 by a 16-year-old apprentice chef in the court of the Imperial Chancellor of Austria. Rights of bakers to claim theirs as "original" were the subject of a seven-year lawsuit.

There is an oft quoted rule that says chocolate and wine must never, ever be served at the same table. This was laid to rest, however, earlier this year when a panel of wine-makers, cooks and chocolate lovers gathered in California to sample wines and chocolate desserts and report on favorable combinations.

They decided that chocolate and wine could be served together with delicious results if a few guidelines were followed.

"Since chocolate's richness tends to coat the palate, it can mask other flavors, including those of wine," writes Barbara Lang, a food re-

searcher and writer for Chocolatier magazine. "It's intensity dominates light bodied wines and causes wines with a low sugar content to taste tart and bitter. Therefore, when choosing a wine to serve with a chocolate dessert, it is a good idea to consider the sugar content and fruitiness of the wine as well as the sweetness and flavor of the chocolate and other ingredients in the dessert."

The chocolate and cream combination is big these days. Cookies 'n Cream ice cream is Blue Bell's second best seller, according to Jennifer Eckermann, public relations assistant at the Brenham creamery. Second only to Homemade Vanilla, Cookies 'n Cream is joined near the top by Caramel Turtle Fudge and Dutch chocolate.

Chocolate, graham crackers and marshmallows remind us all of scouting and campfires. Heavenly Hash and Rocky Road further the chocolate-marshmallow combination with the addition of nuts. Rocky Road is the most popular fudge flavor at the MSC Sweet Shop.

Lots of people appreciate the crunchy addition that nuts make to chocolate. Chocolate is combined with peanuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, pecans, almonds and coconut. The buttery, burnt sugar taste of caramel is often combined with nuts and chocolate to make a triple treat. Who doesn't enjoy a chewy, chocolate Turtle or a Snickers bar now and then?

Reeses peanut butter cups attest to the success of peanut butter and chocolate. Remember the old "you-got-peanut-butter-on-my-chocolate" commercials? The Baby Ruth candy bar (named after Grover Cleveland's youngest daughter, not the baseball player) also has the peanut butter-chocolate combination.

In College Station, Thomas Sweet's chocolate maker Melissa

White says peanut butter is the most popular flavor of all the shop's meltaways. Meltaways are squares of chocolate with various flavorings added. They are supposed to melt in your mouth.

In Mexican cooking, chocolate is used as a flavor enhancer for non-sweet dishes. It is added to mole, a chili-based sauce for poultry and other main dishes. The French use this same method in some preparations of rabbit.

Cocoa is a traditional ingredient in pumpernickel loaves; it adds deep color but barely affects the taste.

For some chocolate lovers, only the perfection of chocolate with chocolate will do. Swensen's has introduced a new group of ice cream sundaes that caters to these people. Chocolate toppings and sauces are piled on top of chocolate ice cream.

Probably the favorite combination of all is chocolate and, well, cookie. Who doesn't like them? The chocolate chip cookie has been popular since its inception in 1930. Experimenting in the kitchen of the Toll House Inn in Pennsylvania one day, owner Ruth Wakefield added chocolate chunks to some cookie batter, expecting the chocolate to melt and run through the cookies. To her surprise, the chocolate stayed in chunks. The cookies were very popular with the inn's guests and word spread to the Nestle Chocolate Company, which created a special bar of semisweet chocolate scored into tiny sections. It was sold with a special tool for separating the sections.

Later, Nestle made semisweet morsels especially for the Toll House cookies and printed the recipe on the pack of each package. There are many variations on the original recipe but the battle still rages as to which recipe produces the Absolute Best Chocolate Chip Cookie.



Photo by BILL HUGHES

The combination of chocolate and wine have long been considered taboo. But that myth was laid to rest earlier this year when winemakers, cooks and chocolate lovers met in California. Their verdict: chocolates are great with wine as long as the taste of the sweets don't overpower the wine's flavor. In addition to wine, alcohol is another popular mixer for chocolate lovers. The warmth of the spirited liquid offsets the coolness of the sweet chocolate.

Researchers dispel the myths of chocolate

By WENDY JOHNSON
Reporter

Chocolate has been shrouded in mystery since its discovery. The literal translation of its scientific name is "food of the gods." Whether you live to eat it or can live without it, one thing is certain: chocolate affects people. And contemporary researchers are finding some scientific bases for many of the myths surrounding chocolate.

The Spanish, who discovered chocolate, kept it to themselves for almost a century. In the early 1600s, the secret began spreading throughout Western Europe.

"Like the Aztecs, many Europeans considered it an aphrodisiac," says Dr. Rudolph Sprungli, chairman of the board at Lindt & Sprungli, a Swiss chocolate manufacturer. "Others believed that chocolate calmed fevers, cured chronic dyspepsia, and prolonged life. But not everyone agreed. A British doctor believed it to be poison ... because it tasted much too good to be medicine."

The aphrodisiac claim may not be too far off. Modern analysis reveals small amounts of the chemical phenylethylamine in chocolate. This chemical is naturally produced in the brain and apparently increases when people fall in love. Maybe that's why chocolate is thought to comfort the lovelorn.

Although chocolate began in the New World, Europeans eat more chocolate nowadays than Americans. Switzerland heads annual consumption at about 22 pounds per person. In the U.S. we consume from 2 to 10 pounds per person. Americans also prefer sweeter tasting chocolate than the rest of the world.

Craig Claiborne of the New York Times writes, "Food cravings encompass everything from such mundane fare as peanuts, pickles and watermelon to the more sophisticated delights of oysters, caviar and champagne. Of all the foods on earth, however, it may be true that a craving for chocolate is the most universal."

Researchers claim that our bodies have "nutrition intuition." When your body needs a particular nutrient, it tells your mind to eat certain foods that will provide it with the missing nutrient.

We usually don't recognize these needs on a conscious level, but according to nutrition professor Brian Morgan at Columbia University, we crave certain foods because we've learned over the years that they relieve the physical symptoms we get when we're low on a particular nutrient. This begins to explain why people crave chocolate when they are depressed or need a quick pick-me-up.

Women are especially subject to food cravings because of the many changes their bodies go through during the month. The hormone progesterone lowers blood sugar levels, causing mild fatigue. Women may tend to crave sweets because they produce quick energy, combating the fatigue. Many women crave all carbohydrates, not just sweets, because they raise the levels of the

Yuppies eat light and work out Monday through Friday but spend weekends relaxing, and eating lavishly. Chocolate is one of their guiltiest pleasures.

The premier chocolatier in most minds is the Belgian-based Godiva. It's class all the way at Godiva. They even make many of their own satin or velvet covered boxes. The Campbell's Soup Company now owns the

"Like the Aztecs, many Europeans considered it an aphrodisiac. Others believed that chocolate calmed fevers, cured chronic dyspepsia, and prolonged life."

— Dr. Rudolph Sprungli, chairman of the board at Lindt & Sprungli, a Swiss chocolate manufacturer

brain's chemical, serotonin, the body's natural tranquilizer. Cookies, cakes, bread and pasta, for example, release insulin, which increases tryptophan, a nutrient. Tryptophan converts to serotonin, which gives a feeling of well being.

Sometimes we crave foods just for the emotional comfort they provide. Remember how chocolate milk or chicken soup helped you feel better when you were sick?

Sociologists say America is becoming a nation of dietary ambiguity.

firm and has continued to support local management traditions and methods in Europe. Former Godiva president Peter Gaffinel said "It is no simple matter to open a new shop in a European town; people there already have their favorite confectionaries. We must lure them in with better chocolates, top quality displays, and very personalized service."

Most of the Godiva chocolates bought in the U.S. are made here.

Chocolates containing alcohol cannot be imported from Europe.

Campbell owns the U.S. affiliates of Godiva, too, but marketing methods differ here. The chocolates must be glamorized and uniquely promoted. There was a time when an American could have a box of Godiva chocolates delivered by a woman in a flesh-colored body stocking on a horse, surrounded by minstrels — for about \$3,000.

Godiva joins Whitman as one of the few companies that includes a map on the inside lid of the box so you can tell what kind of center you'll be biting into.

Chocolate has even been the subject of international intrigue. In 1980, a chocolate espionage case involved an employee at the Souchard Tobler plant who stole some secret chocolate recipes and tried to sell them at the Russian, Chinese and Saudi embassies.

Chocolate seems to have an almost magical power to cause emotional extravagance. But it can produce another response: guilt. Doesn't chocolate cause cavities? Make your face break out? Make you fat?

No, on the first two counts.

The Tooth Report, a dental journal, says Boston's Forsyth Dental Center has found a substance in chocolate that blocks a bacterial en-

zyme that converts sucrose into dextran, a sticky form of sugar that leads to plaque-build-up and cavities. They're trying to isolate this protective substance, also found in tea, coffee and unsweetened fruit juices, which they believe may be similar to tannins.

Although teenagers have long been warned against chocolate as a complexion-killer, most dermatologists today agree that it doesn't trigger breakouts. An important study on this relationship was conducted at the University of Pennsylvania. Acne patients were divided into two groups and fed two types of identical-looking candy bars. One group got bars containing no chocolate, the other group ate bars fortified with 10 times the ordinary amount. Neither group experienced a change in their acne conditions.

On the third count, as with any food, if you gorge yourself on chocolate and lead a sedentary life, of course you will gain weight. Moderation is the key.

Chocolate does have an effect on people. Heed this advice from a Spectator article in England over 200 years ago: "I shall advise my fair readers to be in a particular manner careful how they meddle with romances, chocolates, novels, and the like inflammers ..."

from Art to Zoology
WE HAVE BOOKS FOR EVERYONE!
5 times the selection of the average bookstore at half the publisher's price.
3828 TEXAS AVENUE
Bryan, Texas
846-2738
we buy and sell anything printed or recorded open 7 days a week 10am-9pm Mon.-Sat. • noon-9pm Sun.

ON THE SIDE OF TEXAS A&M University NATIONAL BANK
a novel idea!
New and used hardbacks, paperbacks, magazines, records and cassettes... all at half price or less.
3828 TEXAS AVENUE
Bryan, Texas
846-2738
we buy and sell anything printed or recorded

DIXIE CHICKEN SALOON
327 University Drive College Station
• Hangdown Sausage
• Cheddar Cheese on the Wheel
• Beer on Crushed Ice
• Country Music
• Burgers, Sandwiches
• Authentic Turn of the Century Texana

STRIKE IT RICH !!
Advertising in The Battalion is as Good as Gold!
CALL 845-2611

AL'S WASHATERIA
Welcome Back Aggies
CONVENIENT LOCATION-606 Holleman next to Circle K
LOW PRICES-50¢ wash, 25¢ dry
OPEN 24 HOURS
Large, clean spacious atmosphere
Sell it in Battalion Classified
845-2611

CHICKEN OIL CO.
• Delicious Hamburgers made to order
• Ice Cold Beer including Imported Brands
• Country Atmosphere complete with pool and games
A place you'll want to come back to...
3500 South College Bryan 846-3306

N&S
Movie Biz
With This Coupon Rent a VCR & 2 Movies for only \$8.00 per day
Limit one coupon per customer per day.
Expires Sept. 20
3202 Texas Ave. across from Wal Mart
775-6733