

Go cocoa for chocolate's benefits

By Joshua Baird
Arts & Culture Editor

Is there anything better than the sensation of rich, warm chocolate melting on your tongue? In the spirit of Valentine's Day, we bring you chocolate: the process, the flavor, the reason.

Chocolate has long been a favorite gift during what many people believe to be the most romantic day of the year, but why is that?

Part of the reason is the sheer versatility of chocolate. Not many foods can handle being mixed with such a wide range of other food such as fruits, herbs and certain meats (like bacon).

Another reason is more chemical in nature. "Chocolate has a chemical called phenyl ethylamine, a chemical very similar to when you fall in love," said Sarah Hart, the owner of Alma Chocolate in Portland. "I think chocolate and sex are tied together; they both make you feel good."

Hart said that one of the perks of her job is people are generally in a good mood when they come into her shop, and if they aren't then they are coming to see her because they want to feel better.

As for the health benefits of chocolate, there are a lot of different areas that chocolate helps. "Chocolate is not just delicious, but it contains antioxidants that help fight off free radicals," said Ann Chan, a student at Clackamas Community College. "The purer (darker) the chocolate, the more antioxidants it contains. White chocolate doesn't have any health benefits though because it isn't real chocolate; it is just cocoa butter."

Free radicals are tiny molecules that have the ability to mutate your cells and are one of the possible causes of different types of cancer.

"Dark chocolate puts you into a better



Decadent morsels await customers at Sarah Hart's chocolate shop, Alma Chocolate, in Portland. The chocolate gets out in organized form to catch the customer's attention. Joshua Baird Clackamas Print

mood and lowers your blood pressure. That helps increase the blood flow ... and helps your sex life," said self-proclaimed chocolate lover Laurie Warren.

Now that we have the flavor and the reason behind us, let's move on to the chocolate-making process. Chocolate starts its life off as a fruit from the cacao plant which grows only in certain regions around the equator.

The seed inside the cacao fruit is then

fermented, a process that is "a little like wine making and a little like coffee making," according to Hart.

After the fermentation is complete, it is time to dry the seeds. They can either be sundried or dried by some other method and then they are roasted. The husk is removed and the nibs that remain are ground into a paste which gets processed further into chocolate.

The process is a very long and refined practice, and Hart said it is surprising that was ever discovered considering how hard it is to make it.

In the end, dark chocolate can in fact be good for you and has its roots grown deep into our hearts and collective psyche. So on a happy Valentine's Day, and don't forget to give someone you love that feeling of falling in love all over again with chocolate.

Vegetarianism thrives while meat takes the backseat



By Kayla Calloway
Co-Editor-in-Chief

I grew up with meats; steak, burgers, chicken, pork; I love them all. So when I was first introduced to this recipe as being a vegetarian dish, I was apprehensive. Questions like, "Does it involve tofu?" ran through my head.

I was pleasantly surprised, though, when I read that the ingredients were fairly familiar to me.

I was even more surprised that I loved it from the first bite. Its combination of salty and sweet hit the spot with me and my roommates, who also enjoyed the dish.

Now I must admit that I did alter the recipe a tad by omitting the chili pepper flakes as I am not a fan of spicy foods. In my opinion, the dish was amazing without that one ingredient, but I'm sure it would still taste good if it had been retained.

In addition to attempting this dish, this past week I purchased the book "Food Rules" by Michael Pollan. In it, he advises readers on what and what not to eat from what he learned while trying to figure out the secret to healthy eating.

Some rules are simple, like if it arrives at your car window, it's not food, and avoid foods with high fructose corn syrup. But other rules caught me off guard.

For instance, rule 10 advises you to "avoid foods that are pretending to be something they are not." Pollan references margarine instead of butter, which isn't so much a surprise as soy-based mock meats.

That's right, my apprehension towards tofu wasn't completely unfounded; I just didn't realize it before.

For anyone who's looking for a little guidance when it comes to the foreign and often overwhelming world of healthy eating, Pollan's many books

are a great reference to look to. His advice is easy to follow and the rules make sense.

Did you know that you should avoid words such as "lite" and "non-fat" when you are shopping for your food? I didn't. I grew up drinking two percent milk, and though it's going to be really hard for me to give up that specific delicacy, I will try to follow the rule best I can. The reason, you ask? According to Pollan, "We've gotten fat on low-fat products." It's all in those pesky carbs.

Want to learn more? Pick up a copy of "Food Rules" at your favorite bookstore, or you could meet Pollan at the University of Portland on April 16. Tickets are on sale to the general public now, but all students of any college can get in for free. I plan on going myself.

This week's words to live by come from, of course, Michael Pollan: "Rule 43: Have a glass of wine with dinner."

- Do you have any ideas to help others get back into shape or any healthy recipes to recommend? E-mail Kayla at chiefed@clackamas.edu



This delicious vegetarian cuisine provides the essential nutrients and vitamins that meat does. Michael Bonn Clackamas Print

Bun Bun Noodles with Spicy Peanut Butter Sauce

- 10- to 12-ounce package of whole wheat angel hair pasta or spaghetti
 - 3 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
 - 1 tablespoon minced garlic
 - 1/4 cup smooth natural peanut butter
 - 3 tablespoons sugar
 - 1/4 cup low-salt soy sauce
 - 1 teaspoon chili pepper flakes
 - 3 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil
- Garnishes: chopped green onions, julienned carrots and red peppers, toasted sesame seeds, roasted peanuts, chopped cilantro

1. Cook pasta; drain and set aside in a bowl.
2. In a medium saucepan, sauté the garlic in the sesame oil for a minute or so. Remove the pan from heat.
3. Add the peanut butter, sugar, soy sauce, chili pepper flakes and oil to the saucepan. Use a whisk to stir until thoroughly blended.
4. Pour sauce over noodles and stir to combine.
5. To serve, place a mound of noodles on each plate and pass around the garnishes.