

the love truffle

AND OTHER SWEETS FOR YOUR VALENTINE'S SWEETIE by heather cyrus

mmm, chocolate. It tastes good; some say it's good for you and it just might get your lover in the mood this Valentine's Day.

While food-based aphrodisiacs may not be scientifically proven, chocolate does contain two chemicals attributed to sexual desire. Tryptophan, a building block of serotonin, is a brain chemical attributed to sexual arousal. Phenylethylamine is a stimulant released in the brain when people get the flutters of falling in love. Both chemicals occur naturally in the human brain and are released into the nervous system when we are happy. Whether a true aphrodisiac or simply a placebo, eating chocolate tends to provide a pleasurable experience.

Despite those extra calories, studies show that eating chocolate keeps your blood pressure down, your blood flowing and your heart healthy. Since chocolate is derived from the seed of the theobroma cacao tree (theobroma means "food of the gods"), it contains flavonoids, which help protect plants by shielding them from environmental toxins and helping to repair damage. According to a research newsletter out of OSU's Linus Pauling Institute, we benefit from these antioxidants when we consume foods high in flavonoids. All the red wine (also high in flavonoids) consumed in France has led to something researchers call "the French paradox": the French have a high-fat diet but low death rates from heart disease.



PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

Be warned, not all chocolate is created equal. When chocolate is processed, the antioxidants are destroyed (translation: the darker the better!) Additionally, research suggests that you avoid drinking milk with your chocolate, as it interferes with the absorption of the antioxidants.

Whether motivated by health or romance, finding quality chocolate is easy in Eugene. Among the many options, Euphoria Chocolate Company offers traditional heart and lip-shaped solid chocolates, and chocolate heart dishes filled with cookies or caramel. For a sample of truffle delicacies, try their 27-piece heart box that includes a variety of wine truffles, spice truffles (yup,

these are your turbo aphrodisiacs) and fruit truffles.

Sweet Life Patisserie, 755 Monroe St., has offered their famous "Love Truffle" for years on top of all of the other sweets for your sweet it sells. Biting into the Love Truffle reveals its "earthy" flavor, and the dark chocolate coating encases aphrodisiac herbs and soy-based ganache (yes, this is a vegan treat).

With more than a dozen truffle flavors to choose from, Sweet Life offers traditional heart-shaped Valentine's boxes for customers to fill with their favorite flavors, including chili pepper, which is also said to have aphrodisiac properties.

"If you get a box of truffles from your partner, I'm telling you that makes all the love right there," says Sweet Life co-owner Catherine Reinhart. She adds, "The truffles

are healthy in a sense that they are small, and they are full of flavor, so you can eat one and be happy."

Hosanna-Joy Haines, who says she is a frequent patron of Sweet Life, was in the patisserie sampling treats last week. She says, "I like to buy chocolate for my partner to feed me."

She's not shy about sharing her love for chocolate, "It's exciting putting it in my mouth," Haines says. "I can feel it raising my endorphins. I've actually already had a lot of chocolate this morning."

Whether you want to heat things up, soothe a broken heart or increase those antioxidants, chocolate is just what the (love) doctor ordered. **EW**

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