

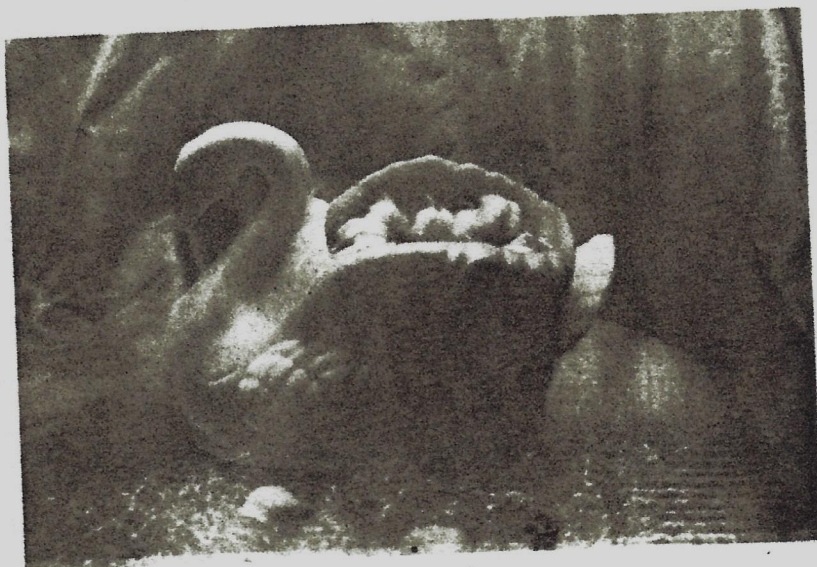
THE wedding SECTION

No die-hard chocoholic needs to be convinced that chocolate is, indeed, an art form in and of itself. But, for the record, when a huge block of chocolate was prominently featured as an entry in the prestigious, trendsetting "Biennial" show at New York's avant-garde Whitney Museum, that occurrence lent a certain *je ne sais quoi* of credence to the belief.

As a result, brides (and their mothers) everywhere feel strongly that for their weddings to qualify as "artistic" in the art-oriented '90s, it is nearly de rigueur to have chocolate, in one form or another, grace their tables.

They can choose from a variety of types: dark chocolate, the favorite of veteran chocoholics (according to my unofficial survey); milk chocolate, lovingly thought of as "chocolate with training wheels"; and white chocolate, that recent darling of a la mode hostesses.

White chocolate is not chocolate at all in that it con-



Let Them Eat

CHOCOLATE

by BARBARA ANN ROSENBERG

tains no chocolate liquor, just cocoa butter, milk solids, sugar and flavorings. It's popular because it can be "colorized" to suit any color scheme, and it has none of the caffeine that makes chocolate a problem for some people's systems.

SHELLS AND BOXES

There are a number of legitimate artisans whose favorite medium is chocolate, craftspeople who are delighted to oblige brides with artistic chocolate renderings. Botticelli was not, after all, the only artist fascinated with the aesthetic configuration of a shell (as in his most famous painting, "The Birth of Venus").

Patrick Gauthron, proprietor of Aux Petits Delices, a patisserie and chocolaterie in Wayne, loves the shell's shape also. He has fabricated a special form to fashion chocolate in shell shapes and other designs; he creates wedding-table centerpieces or individual favors to be taken home or consumed at the party.

"A chocolate shell or heart-shaped box is a very popular wedding-table favor these



Above: Chocolatier Patrick Gauthron, proprietor of Aux Petits Delices, fashions chocolate in shell shapes and other designs for wedding table centerpieces or take-home party favors.
Top: Ann Beth Goldblum, owner of How Sweet It Is, designed these three-dimensional white chocolate swans.

days," Gauthron says, "particularly when it contains chocolate truffles or other candies. It's very attractive and delicious."

Gauthron learned to make chocolates in his native France and then went to Switzerland to hone his art. He uses only French chocolate in fabricating his confections. "It's what I'm used to, and I think it's the best."

There were enough people who felt the same way to coax Cocoa Barry, one of the world's largest producers of French chocolate, to open a huge plant in Pennsauken, N.J. Cocoa Barry bills itself as the "leading supplier and main partner of French craftsmen." Until recently, it was also a center where chocolatiers could perfect their skills under the tutelage of a *maitre-chocolatier*, Jean Marie Guichard, who has since departed to open his own wholesale baking business.

CUSTOM COLORS

It's not always necessary to go to France, Switzerland — or

even New Jersey — to study the art of making chocolate candies. Ann Beth Goldblum, owner of How Sweet It Is, learned her craft right in her own backyard, so to speak, first in classes at local night schools and later at professional seminars at the Candy Show, which is held twice a year, usually at the Valley Forge Convention Center.

"I bought my first store about 3-1/2 years ago," says Goldblum, who now has two stores in Jenkintown. "It seemed such a natural thing to do — to make some of our own candies to augment the ones we buy. I found that people wanted certain candies to match their decor, so I learned how to color white chocolate for various shapes and containers."

Today, custom color combinations are a specialty of How Sweet It Is. "We match the candies — both chocolates and mints — to the color scheme of the wedding," says Goldblum, who explains that her company is frequently contacted by party planners for that very reason.

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Chocolate

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"We've furnished the candies for weddings at The Rittenhouse, The Four Seasons and other top hotels in the city."

Goldblum and three other women in the company make their handmade candies. Among the shapes they form is a three-dimensional swan. "In one instance, we made a small-size swan to hold a mousse for dessert."

"A favorite item that we fashion for weddings is white-chocolate-dipped cashew nuts. We can make those in all colors, too. It's an elegant look. Or, we can mix milk, white and dark chocolate."

Goldblum says that her chocolates are "kosher dairy," but that she has not been able to develop a line of "kosher pareve" chocolates.

FROM BELGIUM

According to Micky Rajter, who with her husband, Willy, operates the Belgian Chocolate House at 1701 Locust St., most of her clients want their little gold box as a favor for their weddings. "They like to see the gold ballotin (Belgian for "box") with the name of our company on it; they know what it signifies."

The Rajters own not only the Belgian House in Center City but also the rights to Arosa brand chocolates (the brand carried in their store) throughout the United States.

"We get our Arosa chocolates directly from Belgium, shipped in special temperature- and humidity-controlled containers," Micky Rajter says. "And, for the record, Arosa was voted No. 1 in a survey done in England this past December, ahead of any of the other Belgian chocolates, so you can see why people like to be able to identify our chocolates with that distinctive box." Micky Rajter adds that she often "dresses" the boxes with ribbons in the color chosen by the bride for her specific wedding.

CHOCOLATE DIET

Jean-Marie Guichard, a veteran chocolatier who even fashioned a chocolate mural for CNN, was a favorite of wedding and special event planners because, he, like the consummate artist Michelangelo, could do nearly anything with his material. But, unfortunately for Delaware Valley residents, Guichard has given all that up to become a contract baker for restaurants and clubs.

Guichard, who used to eat 10 pieces of chocolate a day ("At least 10," he says) has gained weight since he stopped working with chocolate. "I gained 20 pounds since I stopped eating 10 pieces of chocolate every day," he says, bewildered. He cannot find a reason for his weight gain.

Perhaps he's on to a new approach to dieting. Maybe we should have entire meals of chocolate at weddings, instead of just chocolate-box favors or plates of assorted truffles with our coffee.

Would that mean that neither the bride and groom nor the guests would ever have to go on a diet again?

Ask the chocolatiers. There's a splendid choice in the Philadelphia area. And you don't have to wait for the occasion of a wedding to try their wares. □

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