

CHOCOLATE WEEK

Indulge yourself

Kate Hilpern gives a taster of what's in store for the next seven days

Six years ago, when Chocolate Week began, just four London chocolate shops participated. Last year, the event was voted Britain's favourite themed week. Little wonder when you consider that highlights ranged from chocolate and saki tasting to the chocolatiers Rococo creating a chocolate wedding dress.

Want a piece of the action? Here's a taster of what's in store for Chocolate Week 2009.

Samplings and tastings

Chocolate and cheese? Don't knock it 'til you've tried it - the chocolate and cheese matching at La Cave à Fromage, which this year takes place on 16 October, is rated one of the best tasting events to come out of Chocolate Week. Also look out for chocolate matching events with tequila, wine, champagne, whisky, beer, vinegars, coffee and even salt beef.

For more traditional tastings, drop into a Hotel Chocolat store - this partner of Chocolate Week is launching its St Lucia Tasting Box made from cacao from their own plantation in St Lucia. And for a delightfully formal occasion, book a ticket for La Maison du Chocolat's Wednesday evening event, where guests will be introduced to a selection of ganache, truffles and new autumn delicacy, the Grand cru collection.

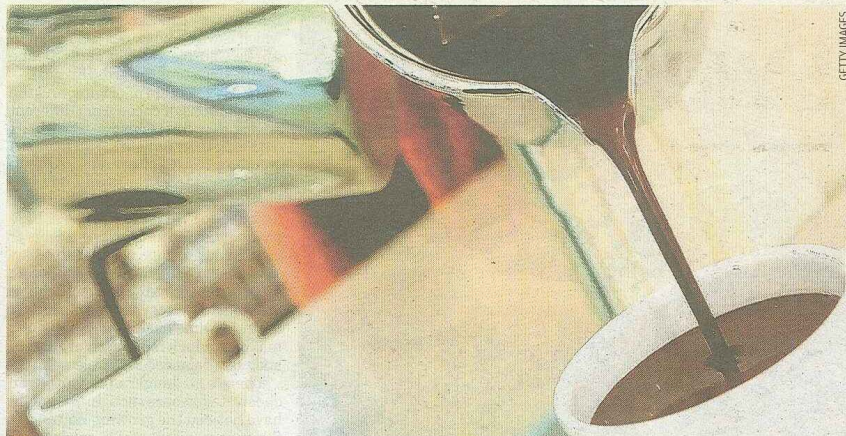
For family fun, look no further than Melt. Tomorrow is Melt's Truffle Rolling Tuesday - a hands-on opportunity to roll your own truffle and create a spiky chocolate bonbon, while Wednesday offers Children's Hour at 4.15pm, and Fun Friday involves chocolate Lollipop making from noon.

London's department stores are a must-visit destination for chocolate lovers too. Harrods has a feast of indulgent tastings and events from the world's best chocolatiers, including cupcake making classes for children. Fortnum & Mason and Selfridges are also holding tasting events all week.

Drop into Rococo in London on Wednesday or Thursday to be shown how to make chocolate; visit Artisan du Chocolat for free 30 minute tasting sessions throughout the week; and go to any top Thorntons store (another Chocolate Week partner) to find their chocolatiers conducting tasting events and demonstrations, as well as sampling of their new products, including their elegant Continental City Boxes.

Afternoon tea and cocktails

Boil the kettle, dust off the teapot, bake a few cakes and get ready for The Big Chocolate Tea Party. It's all about getting together with friends, family and colleagues to raise money for Chocolate Week's charity partner The Sick Children's Trust. Download



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recipes from chefs including Heston Blumenthal and celebrities including Kirsty Gallacher at www.sickchildrenstrust.org/big_chocolate_tea_party1.php. If you'd rather someone else baked for you, visit Bea's of Bloomsbury, which is transforming its store into a chocolate haven for the week to support the Trust.

Although not charity-related, Harrods is offering a chocolate afternoon tea all week, created by Harrods pastry chef using their new couverture. Don't miss the chocolate sculpture being created in the Georgian restaurant on Tuesday and Wednesday. You can also enjoy a "Quintessentially English tea for Two" at Dermarquette, London on Thursday.

For something stronger, check out the Divintini cocktail, using Divine chocolate (another partner of Chocolate Week), at the Sanderson Hotel in London's West End. Meanwhile, at The Gore in Kensington, guests will receive a Divine gold coin which they can swap for two-for-one on Divine chocolate martinis. And at Artisan du Chocolat's Notting Hill shop, 6.30-7.30pm is Happy Hour, where chocolate cocktails include the coca pulp bellini and the matcha and white chocolate New Orleans gin fizz.

A must for pudding enthusiasts is Michael Caines' hotels and restaurants (ABode Exeter, Glasgow, Canterbury and Manchester), where you

can indulge in his Divine Chocolate Tart. And for an entire chocolate menu, book into the Almeida in Islington, London, where Paul A Young has collaborated with head chef Alan Jones to offer a three course menu for £40 including such dishes as "Globe artichoke with hazelnut and cocoa nib crust, fricassée of wild mushrooms" and "Pot roast squab pigeon, candied carrots, Madeira and chocolate jus." Book via www.almeida-restaurant.co.uk.

Other events

All aboard the steam train for the Yorkshire Chocolate Trail, which features chocolate shops, cafés, restaurants, delis, wine merchants (yes, there's chocolate wine) and hotels. And for wannabe Charlies, there's always the Artisan du Chocolat factory tour in Ashford, Kent, on Saturday.

Chocolate classes are being run by L'atelier des Chefs throughout the week, culminating in a chocolate workshop on Saturday, where you get to make delights including chocolate and mandarin macarons and a mini chocolate shot with chopped pistachio. And Chocolatier Melange is also running a chocolate making workshop at its Peckham Rye branch on Saturday.

Party-goers won't want to miss the London Chocolate Group's party on Friday, celebrating some of the UK's best chocolatiers. The centrepiece is

a rich chocolate fountain and while you mingle, you'll be brought round a selection of chocolates including ganache, truffles and salted caramels.

For those as hungry for education as chocolate, Thursday will see some of the industry's experts discuss the history, sociology and politics of the chocolate trade at an event run by Divine, while Thorntons Master Chocolatier Keith Hurdman will be talking on the history, origins and flavour combinations of chocolates on Tuesday.

Recipes revealed

Paul A Young is sharing his chocolate making secrets for the first time in his new book, *Adventures With Chocolate*. Taking you on a chocolate adventure, he reveals how to blend it with ingredients ranging from lavender to chilli.

Meanwhile, Divine has asked a number of top chefs, restaurateurs and celebrities to come up with their perfect Divine Chocolate pudding recipe. See <http://www.divinechocolate.com/recipes/celebrity.aspx>.

Keen to share your own chocolate recipes? Contribute your favourite to the recipe site mydish.co.uk, which will feature them all during the week and contributors can win a chocolate tasting class at Rococo.

For further information visit www.chocolate-week.co.uk

Comment

Kate Johns

Director, Chocolate Week

'IT IS ONE OF THE MOST EMOTIVE FOODS AND MANY PEOPLE FEEL PASSIONATE ABOUT IT'

IN THE UK we've undergone an extraordinary food revolution. As a nation we are now more concerned about the quality of ingredients we're using and have discovered a new appreciation for fine food. Just as we want to know more about the wine we're drinking or the cheese we're eating, we're also beginning to want to know more about chocolate.

Chocolate Week is the opportunity to explore this amazing food, to try chocolate of different origins and to taste some of the best chocolate in the world. It's for everyone who likes chocolate and anyone

who's interested in food. We want people to enjoy the week, have fun and celebrate one of our favourite foods.

Wine underwent a revolution in the UK a number of years ago, with growing interest in the type of grapes, where and how the wine was being made. We're now experiencing that with chocolate, and through our greater appreciation we're seeing a significant growth in the number of chocolate shops owned by talented chocolatiers throughout the UK. London now rivals Paris or Brussels as a chocolate destination.

Walk into a chocolate shop and you are transported to another place. A rich chocolate aroma greets you as you enter, there are stacks of bars of chocolate in a myriad of flavours, trays of filled chocolates, there might be a pot of thick, dark hot chocolate bubbling away and a display of patisserie. Chocolate shops are a pleasure to shop in and all are different, some are luxurious and opulent, some are exclusively designed boutiques and others are cosy and welcoming. All are indulgent and entice you to taste and try the incredible creations.

Chocolate is the most extraordinary product, a good quality chocolate has a myriad of flavour notes and the taste varies depending on the type of bean used, where that bean is grown and how it's made into the finished product. There's a common misconception that chocolate is bad for you but it's the artificial fats, refined sugars and flavourings in a lot of chocolate that are the culprits. Try a high percentage dark chocolate and there are plenty of benefits. And the bitterness that many people associate with dark chocolate comes from over roasted beans, a

common occurrence with mass-produced chocolate.

I'd encourage everyone to try something different. If you think you only like milk chocolate, try a good quality dark as an experiment and see if you like it. If you haven't been to a chocolate tasting in your local chocolate shop then go to one. If you haven't tried a chocolate with an unusual flavour combination then try it. There are plenty of products being launched throughout the UK during chocolate week in chocolate shops. Find your local chocolate shop, pop in and enjoy.

Chocolate is a wonderful product and it's well worth celebrating. We love chocolate. It is one of the most emotive foods and many people feel very passionate about it - they reward themselves with it, treat themselves to it, turn to it in times of sadness, gift it and celebrate with it. It's used to create delicious bars, truffles, cakes, sauces, desserts and ice creams. It's an incredible product and a good bar of chocolate deserves to be savoured. You'll be richly rewarded if you choose to develop a deeper knowledge of this hugely varied and truly special fine food.

