

Dilletante Chocolate - Not Just for Breakfast Anymore

BY RENA LANGILLE

From the confectioneries of Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria and Czar Nicholas II of Russia, came the notebooks of recipes and methods for making Dana Davenport's Dilletante's chocolates. Dana opened his first chocolate shop in Seattle on Broadway in 1977. Next to come was the store on First Avenue, in the Pike Place Public Market, where Dana says he feels good about being linked to another fine Seattle institution. He is also an enthusiastic raconteur on the subject of chocolate, and as a confectioner, knows no boundaries in the world wide market where he shops for the ingredients that go into his creations.

"When I go back and check inventory and see the Inventory Clerk, my gosh, it is from all over the world," muses Dana. "I sometimes think that some Americans don't understand that *we are* no longer a little section of the world, we are so connected. This is not untypical, when Uncle Julius was in Austria,

Vienna was a portal from Asia to Europe. It has always been that way to a large extent, *and I am* amazed about where the fruit comes from."

Dilletante's blueberries and Bing Cherries come from the Northwest, but everything else comes from around the world - apricots from Turkey, strawberries from China, chocolate from Venezuela and Africa. It is all a part of a world society, and Dana fits right in. Using the world wide grocery store, and the tomes of lore handed down from his great grand uncle Julius and his grandfather, Dilletante produces exquisite truffles, caramel, and confections.

The family legacy of decadent desserts began Hungary when great grand uncle Julius Franzen was ten years old. The lad was sent from his home in Medjasch, Hungary, to Budapest where he was apprenticed to a local confectioner. After years of study he was appointed Master Pastry Chef to Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria where he worked just a few years before going on to Paris to further his education. A couple of years later he was commissioned to serve in the confectionery of Czar Nicholas II of Russia, and

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From left: Caramel cream, chocolate covered espresso beans, chocolate covered almonds, gift boxes of hand picked truffles, the marbled chocolate heart box with truffles and above, the red velvet box of truffles. Below, various boxes of dragees (chocolate covered fruits), and hidden in the back, the chocolate Salmon bar.

then Earl came along.

Dana's great grandfather, Earl Davenport was a missionary in Bulgaria where he fell in love with Uncle Julius' sister Ottilia, and eventually whole family came to Oregon in 1910. In 1912 the two were married. Then Earl, with an engineering background, and Julius built and opened "The Chocolate Truffle Company" in Portland. The Northwest has never been the same.

Although Dana's father did not become a confectioner in the business, during the Christmas holidays he would bring out the sacred marble slab and make candy. The kitchen was alive with the warm smells of fudge and butter toffee and seven children crowding around to watch. Toffee was the most tantalizing. After the molten sugar was poured on the slab, it had to sit all night to mellow. The next day it was cut and the pieces dipped in chocolate. Women in the Davenport family were fine cooks, desserts were served several times a week, especially on Sundays. Of all the children, Dana was the one who took an interest in the family cuisine. Having lost his mother at an early age, Fanny the housekeeper taught him how to bake. He won first prize in an Ingram High School baking contest for an orange-chocolate marble cake with fudgy frosting. After graduating from high school Dana studied under Marcel, of The Swiss Pastry shop in Seattle. Marie Hall, was Marcel's candy dipper until she retired. When Dilletante's opened she became, at age 80+, the candy dipper for Dana's business.

During my interview with Dana Davenport, I asked him if the ingredients in his confections had been affected by changes in supplies and manufacturing methods over the years. The answer was surprising and unexpected. The chocolate used today has evolved because the base agriculture of cacao (the small, slightly fermented seeds of the Cacao tree used in making chocolate) has been improved on the small farms that grow cacao and coffee beans. Once the beans come to the processor, the particles can now be broken down much finer than in the 20s and 30s, making a smoother, more flavorful chocolate than what Dana's grandfather used.

Tastes change in the way people address chocolate. During the war years, people depended more on sugar for part of their dietary carbohydrates, then they were more active and burned it off. Now, people want to consume less sugar and prefer more cacao flavor. They even want less sugar in milk chocolate, so the milk solids are pumped up to the extent that sugar is subtracted from the mix. When making the house dark ephemere, there is now 53% cacao instead of the 48% used in the 30s and 40s.

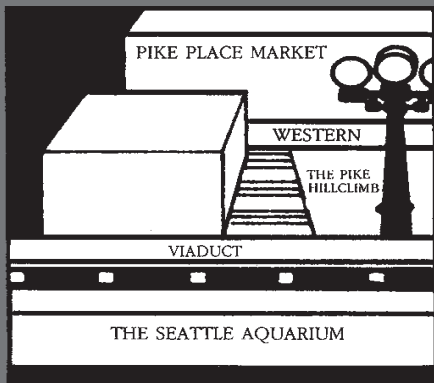
Walking through the door of Dilletante's on First Avenue, a waft of fine cacao essence fills your nose soft as sunshine on a rose, and just as sweet. If you take a moment and let yourself be filled with the essence, you will be ready for the full experience of tasting the solid form. The body loves chocolate, but the pleasure of eating it goes deeper than taste. For eons, chocolate has been known as a recuperative and an aid to health. Pharaohs, Emperors, Kings, physicians, and the people who grow cacao have known this, but, as was the case with chicken soup, scientists had to find out why. Research has revealed that chocolate is full of flavanoids, those dark mysterious things found in blueberries and red wine that fight cholesterol. It also contains catechins, flavanoids that have antioxidant properties, which work to help prevent heart disease and cancer; and finally there is theobromine, a close relative of caffeine, which helps relieve stress. So with all that scientific knowledge, there should be no guilt in treating yourself or a sweetheart to one or some of Dilletante's best.

In a few weeks look for Dilletante's line of couverture (confectionary grade chocolate) as well as three to four kinds of chocolate chips for baking. Along with new products, there is now a new Dilletante Mocha Bar in Westlake Mall. You may now accompany your chocolate with a glass of Port. Ever growing, and always searching the globe for special ingredients, Dilletante's maintains its mission of bringing you the best; and it's available right there on First Avenue at the Market.

Places to buy chocolate treats around the Market:

Rose's Chocolate Treasures in Post Alley, Pike Place market Grocery & Deli, Sur la Table, DeLaurentis, The Made in Washington Store, Chukur Cherries, The Candy Store (on the Market Mezzanine) and Sweetie Candy on level one down under, and to make your sweetie a really good cup of home made hot chocolate, pick up a box of Ibarra chocolate from The Mexican Grocery or El Mercado Latina - melt two triangles in a small cup of hot milk and top with cream and a sprinkle of cinnamon.

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