

Chocolate sweetens AIDS foundation

Chicago Tribune - December 6, 2004

Lucinda Hahn is at lhahn@tribune.com.

In a completely selfless act of reporting, Toast of the Town attended the World of Chocolate party Thursday night, where she and about 1,000 guests gorged on a sinful array of chocolate concoctions to benefit the AIDS Foundation of Chicago.

One of the partiers was a sexologist. "We study sexual habits," said Rachel Ross, who has a PhD in sexology. "And we provide sexual health information and sex tips."

Ross stood sipping a tiny cup of organic yellow corn soup topped with white-chocolate-and-goat-cheese foam from the Wells Street restaurant SWK -- one of some 20 local vendors who turned the Fairmont Hotel's ballroom into a Willy Wonka-esque funhouse of epicurean decadence.

Cut to the really important stuff:

"Isn't chocolate a sexual enhancer?" Toast of the Town asked the sexologist.

"Oh, yes," Ross said, nodding. "The same hormone is released in your brain when you have an orgasm as when you eat chocolate."

TOT asked for more details -- to, uh, report to readers.

"It's serotonin -- that's an enjoyment-happy hormone," Ross explained. "So if you can sprinkle a little chocolate into the sexual activity, that's even better."

"Marshall Field's sells a chocolate body sauce; I recommend that very highly -- and it doesn't get hard, like if you use the stuff for sundaes you get from the grocery store."

Nothing at the benefit was pedestrian, grocery-store fare. Gourmands cruised the ballroom swilling chocolate martinis and swarming tables manned by chefs who had been challenged to let their creativity run wild.

Commodities trader Steve Kaufman and his wife, Lori, swooned over the fried chocolate-and-raspberry-filled croque-monsieurs, by John Bubala of Thyme.

Lori: "It's like eating chocolate french toast with raspberries!"

Steve: "I have to have another one."

Lori: "Oh, I'm gonna be so sick."

Phil Stefani Signature Restaurants chefs pushed small plates of pear-filled ravioli, bathed in marscapone cheese sauce and drizzled with chocolate.

Blommer Chocolate Store, which manufactures the stuff at its Kinzie Street and Des Plaines Avenue factory, gave 10-pound white- and milk-chocolate megabars to raffle winners.

The French Pastry School in the Loop offered tiny ganache candies, some adorned with 18-karat-gold lettering. "It's food grade," assured school instructor John Knaus, laughing. "It'll only hurt your kidneys for a little while."

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago, celebrating its 20th anniversary next year, has given away more than \$14 million to support HIV/AIDS prevention and education. To that end, staffer Sanford Gaylord passed out free samples of the new female condom, which -- in the vein of dry cleaning and haircuts -- costs about four times as much as the male version.

At 9 p.m., a gaggle of celebrity judges -- including ABC-Ch. 7's Kathy Brock, Fox-Ch. 32 anchor Robin Robinson and the "Today" show's "Domestic Diva" Wayne Johnson -- gave the best-in-show award to online chocolatier Love in Disguise (www.loveindisguise.com), for its handmade truffles.

By then, though, the love affair was over. "I'm chocolate-ed out," said Vicky Alfara, an optometrist, waiting for her coat. "I can't look at it anymore."

041206
CT041211

Copyright © 2004 - Chicago Tribune. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission. Reproduction of this article (other than one copy for personal reference) must be cleared through the Chicago Tribune, Permissions Desk, 435 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611 <http://www.chicagotribune.com>

AEGiS is made possible through unrestricted grants from [Boehringer Ingelheim](#), [Bridgestone/Firestone Charitable Trust](#), [Bristol-Myers Squibb Company](#), [Elton John AIDS Foundation](#), the [National Library of Medicine](#), and [donations](#) from users like you. *Always watch for outdated information. This article first appeared in 2004. This material is designed to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between you and your doctor.*

AEGiS presents published material, reprinted with permission and neither endorses nor opposes any material. All information contained on this website, including information relating to health conditions, products, and treatments, is for informational purposes only. It is often presented in summary or aggregate form. It is not meant to be a substitute for the advice provided by your own physician or other medical professionals. *Always discuss treatment options with a doctor who specializes in treating HIV.*

Copyright ©1980, 2004. AEGiS. All materials appearing on AEGiS are protected by copyright as a collective work or compilation under U.S. copyright and other laws and are the property of AEGiS, or the party credited as the provider of the content. comments@aegis.org