



# Chocolate!

A sweet San Diego experience

It is no big secret why we love chocolate. Rich, smooth and luxurious, chocolate can be the perfect pause in a stressful day, the secret ingredient in a favorite dish, or an edible token of our affections.

According to Nielson research, in the United States alone, 58 million pounds of chocolate is sold for Valentine's Day with \$345 million in sales. Europeans consume even more chocolate than Americans, and men eat just about as much as women. In fact, chocolate consumption is up all over the world, and there is even a movement to blend chocolate with world peace, an excellent combination (search online for World Peace cookies).

### Why Chocolate on Valentine's Day?

Who was St. Valentine anyway? He's a bit of a mystery really, but there are interesting stories and legends that include plenty of romance and



Photo courtesy of the San Diego Natural History Museum

## Chocolate at the NAT

**San Diego Natural History Museum**

1788 El Prado, Balboa Park  
www.sdnhm.org; 619-232-3821

Have you been putting off a visit to the Chocolate exhibit at the Nat? Well, don't wait another day!

The moment you enter the exhibit, a wonderful aroma of chocolate fills your nose. Take a fantastic journey from the rainforests where the cacao trees grow, through the history of chocolate in the Mayan and Aztec cultures, and then on to Europe where chocolate and sugar meet for the first time. The exhibit ends with a nostalgic look into the modern world's love of chocolate. With interactive displays and short video clips, this exhibit is great for families.

Open now through March 10. Turn to page 26 of this issue for a special admission discount coupon!

the giving of love letters, better known as "Valentines."

But why chocolate? The Mayans and Aztecs believed that chocolate gave them ... well let's just say a boost to their love life. Modern researchers have found that chocolate does cause our brains to release endorphins that make us feel good. Combine that

## San Diego Chocolatiers

Many offer classes and tastings!

### Chi Chocolat

Liberty Station/Pt. Loma  
www.chichocolat.net; 619-546-0650

### Chuo Chocolatier

UTC and Del Mar  
www.chuochocolatier.com; 858-546-1463

### Dallmann Confections

El Cajon and Del Mar  
www.dallmannconfections.com

### Eclipse Chocolat

New South Park location, University Heights  
www.eclipsechocolat.com; 619-578-2984

### The Elegant Truffle

Point Loma  
www.trufflemaker.com; 619-222-1889

with how chocolate has been thought of as divine since ancient times, and you've got the perfect gift for your Valentine. [www.history.com/topics/valentines-day](http://www.history.com/topics/valentines-day)

### Responsible Chocolate

Where does this delicious, magical substance come from? The cacao bean, pronounced (ka-KOW), grows on the

Photo courtesy of the San Diego Natural History Museum



## Chocolate Recipes for Your Sweet Valentines from San Diego Food Bloggers!

### 5-minute Chocolate Peppermint Mousse

[www.kitchenkonfidence.com/2012/12/5-minute-chocolate-peppermint-mousse/](http://www.kitchenkonfidence.com/2012/12/5-minute-chocolate-peppermint-mousse/)

### 3-Ingredient Avocado Chocolate Cookies

<http://kirbiecravings.com/2012/09/3-ingredient-avocado-chocolate-cookies.html>

### Rancho La Puerta's Mayan Hot Chocolate

<http://sandiegofoodfinds.com/?p=7008>

### Grilled Churros with Nutella Sauce

[www.paninihappy.com/grilled-churros-with-nutella-sauce/](http://www.paninihappy.com/grilled-churros-with-nutella-sauce/)

### Fruit Tacos with Chocolate Tortillas

[www.munchinwithmunchkin.com/2012/04/30/fruit-tacos-with-chocolate-tortillas/](http://www.munchinwithmunchkin.com/2012/04/30/fruit-tacos-with-chocolate-tortillas/)  
(Yeah, OK, Kris is from Texas, but how could I leave this out!)



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- Chocolate Kiss Lip Treatment
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The Three Wishes

**Feb 6 – 10**  
Chu Chu The Dragon

**Feb 13 – 17**  
The Rabbit In The Moon

**Feb 27 – Mar 3**  
The Very Hungry Caterpillar (and other funny stories)

**Feb 20 – 24**  
Quest For Planet Pork Chop



# Chocolate

THE EXHIBITION

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Chocolate Sundays—February 24 and March 3

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[www.sdnhm.org](http://www.sdnhm.org) 877.946.7797

Chocolate and its national tour have been developed by The Field Museum, Chicago. This project was supported, in part, by the National Science Foundation. Chocolate in San Diego is supported by City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture and the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors, Community Enhancement Program.



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small tropical tree called *Theobroma cacao*. *Theobroma* in Greek means “food of the gods.” The Mayans enjoyed chocolate as a spicy, frothy drink, and 600 years later chocolate partnered with sugar in Europe and chocolate mania began. But along with this valuable commodity, conflict often arises.

Today we can make sure our chocolate doesn't come at the cost of innocent people or their land by purchasing from responsible companies. Buying Fair Trade-certified products ensures that no child is working for your chocolate and that families are given opportunities and treated fairly.

Buying organic chocolate means you are supporting sustainable agriculture,



Photo courtesy of the San Diego Natural History Museum

## Fun Resources

### The Science of Chocolate

[www.sciencekids.co.nz/videos/chemistry/chocolate.html](http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/videos/chemistry/chocolate.html)

### Chocolate History Timeline

[www.mce.k12tn.net/chocolate/history/name.htm](http://www.mce.k12tn.net/chocolate/history/name.htm)

### Gluten-free Kids Chocolate Recipes

[www.glutenfreekidschocolate.com](http://www.glutenfreekidschocolate.com)

### Interactive Chocolate Manufacturing

[http://archive.fieldmuseum.org/chocolate/kids\\_seedtosweet.html](http://archive.fieldmuseum.org/chocolate/kids_seedtosweet.html)

### Chocolate Wisdom

[www.virtualchocolate.com/quotes.cfm](http://www.virtualchocolate.com/quotes.cfm)

which means a healthier planet. There is no denying the difference in a high quality, organic chocolate product.

Learn more at [www.vision.ucsd.edu/~kbranson/stopchocolateslavery/index.html](http://www.vision.ucsd.edu/~kbranson/stopchocolateslavery/index.html).

### Raw Chocolate

Chocolate joins the raw food revolution to avoid the over processing that strips nutrients, adds unnecessary ingredients and alters taste. Boasting more than 300 nutritional compounds and loads of anti-oxidants, chocolate can provide a lot of health benefits when we indulge.

Gnosis Chocolate is a wonderful company that provides information on raw chocolate and other social and environmental responsibility projects on its website [GnosisChocolate.com](http://GnosisChocolate.com).

Why not surprise your Valentine with an afternoon at Summers Past Farms ([SummersPastFarms.com](http://SummersPastFarms.com)), a Gnosis retailer, and nibble on sumptuous raw chocolate within their beautiful gardens? My favorite local getaway mixed with fine chocolate—it's an unbeatable combination.

### Be a Chocolate Connoisseur

There are four main types of chocolate: bittersweet, semisweet, milk and white. This seems simple enough, until you factor in percentages of cacao, which indicate the intensity of the flavor, and the more than 1500 compounds that give chocolate a specific essence, from berries to lavender.

What's an amateur chocolate connoisseur to do? Eat chocolate! Experiment with different percentages and flavors, and start by mindfully touching the chocolate, then breaking it in half and smelling the wonderful aromas. Most importantly slow down and savor each bite. Pay attention to each subtle difference. Let the chocolate melt in your mouth to experience all that it has to offer, then sit back and dream up a chocolaty heaven for your sweetheart. ❖

*Laura Pardo writes from South Park and will definitely be trying the Avocado Chocolate cookies.*

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