

Men love chocolate too!

Description



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I love chocolates. If it comes in the shape of a bar or as individual pieces in a box, I enjoy eating a piece (or more) several times in any given week.

I do not like chocolate in just any form. Chocolate syrup on an ice cream sundae is my first choice before a caramel one. But I seem to steer away from chocolate mousse, chocolate milk and especially chocolate polvoron (powdered milk candies).

It is strange, because when I was a child I loved all things chocolate. If it had chocolate in it or on top of it, I ate it! This love was exploited by my late grandfather when he persuaded my siblings and me to eat "chocolate meat," which was actually dinuguan, a stew made with pork or chicken blood.

It sure did not taste like chocolate, but we developed a taste for it. It was only after some months and repeated meals that he revealed the true ingredients.

Maybe this well-meaning deception pushed me to become more selective and investigative in my enjoyment of chocolates. As I got older (and wiser), I seem to have become choosier than when I was younger. I prefer the confectionary form.

I loved chocolate as a child in the 1970s. We had a limited choice of local brands. The problem was that really good chocolate was difficult to have. Colonialism was still quite strong in the Philippines, and the US was considered by our grandparents (who lived through World War II) to be the savior of the world. Everything American was better.

Handed out by GI Joes

In the 1940s, people in war-torn countries were introduced to the treat when it was handed out by those tall, heroic GI Joes. Chocolate bars were issued to American soldiers as a quick, ready-to-eat food to keep them energized and ready to fight.

(M&Ms were invented for the soldiers because the candy coating prevented the chocolate from melting in your hand.) Having American chocolate became a sort of status symbol because it was not easy to come by.

This was still the case in my childhood. Unlike today, the supply of good chocolates was scant. A few select stores offered them at prohibitive prices. Once in a rare while, you could get a few pieces from a traveling relative or friend. If you had some you were either rich or very, very loved.

Our family was blessed in that my mother was a US citizen who worked in the Philippines for the US Navy. This gave her shopping privileges in the commissaries of US bases, with access to chocolates at considerably lower prices than in the local market.

This allowed us to make a really good impression on people when we were able to give American chocolates as gifts.

My brothers and I were really popular (as gift-givers) on Valentine's Day in the coed school we attended! Being the skinny, introverted nerd I was, I would feel my popularity waning the very next day after the chocolates had been consumed. But I did not care, because we still had access to the supplies of US chocolates. Chocolates were my friends.

Then one wonderful day, my father added to our chocolate blessings. As a Philippine Air Force pilot, he had lengthy missions to Europe. He would come home with boxes of chocolates from Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, France and Great Britain.

With no Internet and Google back then, we did not know that chocolates were made in so many different countries and in different varieties. Mom then enlightened us about the truth that our favorite American bars were ordinary, and that some of the European ones were the top of the line. Their creaminess, their silky texture, indeed their chocolatey-ness, told us how special they were.

Sweet heaven

There was milk chocolate, filled bonbons like truffles, ganache, caramels and pralines, premier cru, single-estate, and the high cocoa-content chocolate bars. We were in sweet heaven!

And since air travel was not as affordable back then, we rationed the amount we ate each day so that we would have enough until Dad's next flying mission.

The scant supply made good chocolate such a treasure. So, you made it a point to let others know you had some. Wrappers of bars we had consumed were preserved and integrated into our schoolbook covers for high visibility.

Once in a while, my grandmother would put a bar in our lunch boxes so that schoolmates would be witness to our good fortune.

Indeed people coveted chocolateâ€”they would mysteriously â€œdisappearâ€ from your lunch container.

Today itâ€™s good to know that chocolates have health benefits. They are said to contain polyphenols, catechins and flavonoids that have been shown to be good for the body.

The benefits include better use of insulin, reduced blood pressure, better formation of blood platelets and even improved vascular function.

The eating of dark chocolate in small but regular amounts has been associated with a lower risk of heart attack.

Researchers point out that chocolate does not cause pimples. Rather, it is sugar that has been linked to acne and other health issues. Chocolate is off the hook. Good news for us who love the stuff.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a person who is addicted to or excessively fond of chocolate is a â€œchocoholic.â€

â€œChocophileâ€ is an informal term which is sometimes used like chocoholic, but purists say that it pertains to someone with a great love for, or an inordinate attraction to, chocolates.

I do not really know if I fit under either term. I just know that the right chocolates are delicious and healthy, and I love eating them!

[Richard Cepeda Go](#)

Category

1. Factual
2. Fun
3. Information

Tags

1. BonBons
 2. Caramel
 3. Catechins
 4. Chocolate
 5. Cocoa
 6. Confectionary
 7. CrÃ“mes
 8. Flavanoids
-

9. Ganache
10. Ice Cream
11. Love
12. M&M's
13. Milk
14. Mousse
15. Polvoron
16. Polyphenols
17. Pralines
18. Premier Cru
19. Syrup

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