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Anthropology of Food Week 6

Happy Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day, is a traditional day for *chocolate*—and not just in the U.S.A. . . .

In Japan, South Korea, China and Taiwan *girls* are giving "[chocolate of love](#)," literally "true feeling chocolate," to their male friend(s) with whom they have an actual or hoped-for romantic attachment. Chocolate of lesser quality, "girl chocolate" (also called "[obligation chocolate](#)"), is given by the girls to male colleagues and friends with whom they have no romantic attachment. On March 14, "[White Day](#)," a month after Valentines, the men in turn give chocolates to the ladies.

"The tradition of giving chocolates on Valentine's Day can be traced to Richard Cadbury, of the English chocolate-making family, who 'invented' the first Valentine's Day candy box during the Victorian era. The Victorians, who fancied decorating cards with plump cupids shooting arrows of love, later transferred the image to the lids of heart-shaped boxes filled with dreamy combinations of silken chocolates." ("For Lovers, Chocolate," Niki Dwyer, *The Buffalo News*, February 11, 1998, Lifestyles, p. 2D, quoted in Food Timeline <<http://www.foodtimeline.org/valentines.html>>.) Late Victorian children could cut out the pictures on the decorated Cadbury "fancy chocolates" boxes and stick them into scrapbooks, if the Victorian ladies didn't save the fancy chocolate boxes for use as trinket or button boxes. Victorian and Edwardian chocolate boxes are now treasured collectors' items (Food Timeline).

Week 14 or 15, time permitting, we'll have a look at the European Union's "Thirty-Years' War" a "**Chocolate War**", in effect brought on by Cadbury's of England. The EU "Chocolate War" is a classic case study in business and

marketing—with international regulations. But this week you just need to sweeten thing up a little with chocolate. . . . If you purchase chocolate for anyone (including yourself), be sure it is at least “70%” [cocoa solids and cocoa butter]. And *recipients of chocolate* take note: if your admirer gives you chocolate that's any less than “70%” it might be time to think about looking for a different admirer.

The single exception to the “at least ‘70%’” rule lies in baking. The *Cooks Illustrated* folks, the American (U.S.A.) gurus of practical scientific food preparation, say baking [adjective, not verb] chocolate for the holidays should be *no more than* “60%”. (So if your admirer shows up with Valentine *baked goods* with chocolate of “60%” quality, that's actually a plus; keep him/her.)

And if you get chocolate on Valentine's Day, why not follow the Asian “tradition” and give some back on the 14th of March.

Why chocolate?

No.

It's not **an aphrodisiac**—or at least if it is, there is no scientific proof of that. Phenylethylamine in chocolate *is* an aphrodisiac, but it's not likely that enough of it makes it to your brain while eating chocolate “to make a difference,” so to speak. But there's always the power of suggestion . . . and chocolate sugar pills (placebos) are powerful psychosomatics

<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth4616/cpplacebo.html>.

Giving chocolate goes back to the days of the Ancient Mesoamericans who “invented” chocolate, as you know, as a byproduct of beer making. So gifting chocolate has been around for a long time—probably for 3000 years.

More information on chocolate is available from the class Chocolate page at


<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anthfood/afchocolate.html>.

As for St. Valentine, as in “St. Valentine's Day,” there are more than a dozen St. Valentines in the Roman Catholic Church, and neither of the two Valentines thought to be responsible for “Valentine's Day” ate chocolate

(Valentine of Rome, and Valentine of Terni in Central Italy). And Valentine's Day itself became associated with romance only in the Middle Ages.

Chef Oscar Ortega of Jackson, Wyoming—one of the folks featured in the Who's Who section of the course—won first place in 2016 in the world competition for his praline creation. He is now recognized as one of the world's greatest chocolatiers. And, at least equally important, he's a very nice person <<http://atelierortega.squarespace.com/#oscar-ortega>>.



Locally, Russell Stover, nephew to his namesake who created the candy company, served on the City Council of Duluth, MN from 2000-2008 .



For a little variety this year, try a junk food bouquet . . .

[This Junk Food Bouquet Takes Valentine's Day To The Next Level](#)

-- [Joanna Borns](#), [BuzzFeed](#) (11 February 2017)

More information on Valentine's Day is available from the class WebPage at

http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anthfood/afvalentines_day.html#title.

Enjoy your chocolate . . . and Valentine's Day,

Tim Roufs

<http://www.d.umn.edu/~troufs/>