

Beautiful Chocolate

By Kayla Fioravanti

What can I say? I love chocolate; I am a chocolate connoisseur. I believe that there is one Universal and International truth: chocolate is pure heaven for women and just another food for men. You can watch a woman melt into the experience of a piece of chocolate. Her shoulders relax and her eyes roll back and close, as she fully experiences her chocolate with a smile from ear to ear. It is like the world vanishes and peace engulfs the woman. I have watched stress, hurt, frustration and worry dissolve from the very frame of woman when she bites into a piece of chocolate. On the other hand watching a man eat chocolate is a disgrace. They chew the divine chocolate as if they do not even notice that heaven itself has brought them this gift.

This year I forced myself to switch from milk chocolate to the dark chocolate that I have always avoided. Everything I read talked about how good dark chocolate was for me, but I resisted because I am historically a milk chocolate enthusiast. It took a lot of resolve to make the change. It was accompanied by a full lifestyle change that included eating only organic foods and quitting coffee, processed foods and sugar. I decided that I would treat myself with just two pieces of dark chocolate per day. The rough part was that I did not like the taste of dark chocolate. I bought every single organic dark chocolate bar on the market and day by day tried two pieces. For many days it did not feel like much of a reward, but finally I discovered Green and Blacks "Maya Gold", and found my reward.

Exactly what does chocolate have to do with beauty? As far as I am concerned there are few public expressions of a woman's beauty: child rearing, being in love and chocolate consumption. A woman with her child is transformed and becomes the most beautiful expression of womanhood; a mother. A woman in love glows with joy, love and hope, and finally, a woman eating chocolate finds her center, her quiet peace. However, more than that, chocolate is actually good for you inside and out.

The Good Stuff Chocolate Contains:

Hormones and Emotions: Chocolate is believed to be an unconscious attempt to keep hormone levels more steady. During PMS my body screams for chocolate. The long standing debate is whether the cravings answer the body's physical or psychological call for chocolate. Some believe that is all in our minds and we are feeding a guilty pleasure at our weakest moment. Others believe that our bodies crave some of the more than 400 chemicals found in chocolate, many of which affect mood. The chemicals in chocolate affect levels of the body's mood-affecting chemicals, including serotonin, endorphins, theobromine and phenylethylamine. Serotonin is a chemical messenger in the brain that affects emotions, behavior, and thought. Endorphines are chemicals in the brain that are responsible for positive moods. Theobromine is stimulant found in cocoa which gives chocolate mood elevating effects. Phenylethylamine is a naturally occurring neuroamine which has been shown to relieve depression, increase attention and promote energy. Your body releases phenylethylamine in response to romance.

Health, Physically and Emotionally Speaking:

As it turns out chocolate really is good for the heart. According to new studies the antioxidants in dark chocolate may increase “good” HDL cholesterol levels as much as ten percent. The trick is to find a dark chocolate with a minimum content of 70% chocolate solids. Two ounces per day have been found to be beneficial to your health, providing protection against heart disease, high blood pressure and has as many cancer fighting antioxidants as a glass of wine. Chocolate contains essential trace elements, naturally occurring chemicals and nutrients such as iron, calcium, catechins, magnesium, potassium, flavonoids and vitamins A, B1, B2, C, D, and E. I actually, even found studies proving that that dark chocolate can be a powerful cough suppressant, treat diarrhea and stave off artery hardening in smokers. Most importantly, I have found that treating myself to two pieces of dark chocolate has kept me faithfully eating healthy and organic, and I never feel the need to binge or break my good habits because I never feel deprived.

Skin Deep:

When I was a teenager I was told that chocolate causes acne. Thankfully, that is no longer the prevailing belief. Chocolate in moderation has no ill effect on your skin. To make matters even better the cocoa bean contains cocoa butter which really is something you can rub all over yourself and bathe in. Cocoa butter softens and lubricates the skin and leaves every skin type feeling and smelling like a piece of heaven. Any time you chose a cocoa butter or chocolate themed body product, make sure that the scent comes from the pure raw cocoa butter. All the fragrance oils for chocolate end up smelling the same: sweet and over exaggerated. Try some of the wonderful products made with real cocoa butter for a true treat.

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