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Chocolate tasting at the Bartlett Library, a delicious experience

On Wednesday, Feb. 1, Pastry Chef Rose Deneen brought chocolates from around the world for 30 patrons to taste test.

The chocolates were from Spain (Chocceur), Italy (Perugina), Belgium, Iceland (Noi Sirius) and Moser Roth. As for where she bought the chocolates from, Deneen shared that they were purchased from Aldi, Caputo's, Trader Joe's and/or Whole Foods. She joked that it would have been cruel to give the patrons something to eat that they really liked, but then couldn't buy at a regular store.

Deneen shared some dos and don'ts when it comes to chocolate:

Do:

- Purchase chocolates over 50% chocolate; they contain less sugar and have more intense chocolate flavor.
- Store in a dry, dark and cool environment, like a kitchen cabinet.
- Eat a small amount of dark chocolate often; check labels to verify that the first ingredient is chocolate and not sugar.

Don't:

- Use milk chocolate in desserts. Most have less than 35% chocolate and impart very little flavor.
- Store in refrigerator or freezer; chocolate absorbs moisture and destroys flavor.
- Chew your pure chocolate; let it melt on your tongue instead. The warmth of your mouth will bring out the subtle flavors.

After the taste-testing, Deneen had a few things planned for the patrons to eat: Chocolate chunk cookies, easy chocolate mousse and chocolate truffles. She made the mousse and truffles during the program, so the patrons could see how everything was done.

Available for patrons was a sheet with the recipes and cooking methods to take home with them to try out. Here is what Deneen gave the patrons in attendance:

To make chocolate chunk cookies, you need:

- 8 oz. (two sticks) – Butter, melted
- 1 cup – Dark brown sugar

- 2 – Eggs
- 1 tsp. – Vanilla extract
- 2 ¼ cup – All-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. – Baking soda
- 1 tsp. – Salt
- 2-3 pkg. (2.46 oz. each) – Perugina chocolate, chopped into small pieces

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Beat butter and brown sugar in mixer on medium speed for two minutes. Scrape down the bowl. One at a time, add in the eggs and blend well. Add the vanilla, flour, baking soda and salt; beat on low just until blended. Add chopped chocolate, mix and scrap bowl. Scoop onto parchment paper-lined sheet pans and back for 14-16 minutes.

To make the easy chocolate mousse, you need:

- 8 oz. – Dark or milk chocolate, finely chopped
- 2 (12 oz. each) – Frozen non-dairy whipped topping, thawed

Melt the chocolate in a large bowl over warm water, making sure water does not boil and no water gets into the chocolate. Once the chocolate is fully melted, remove from heat. Add about ¼ of the whipped topping into warm chocolate and fold quickly to slowly cool chocolate. Then fold in the remaining whipped topping. Using a pastry bag, pipe into dishes or chocolate cups, then refrigerate. Mousse can also be immediately poured into a crumb crust for a chocolate mousse pie (recipe should be cut in half). Garnish with additional whipped topping and fresh berries if desired.

To make the chocolate truffles, you need:

- ½ cup – Heavy cream
- 16 oz. – Semisweet or bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 6 tbsp. – Butter, softened
- ¼ cup – Powdered sugar
- ¼ cup – Dutch-process cocoa powder

Line an 8” square pan with plastic wrap and set it aside. Then heat the heavy cream in a saucepan over a medium heat until steaming, but not boiling. Off the heat, add chocolate and let it stand for one minute. Stir until chocolate is melted, and then stir in the butter until melted. Pour into prepared pan and refrigerate until firm, which should be in about two hours. Remove truffle mixture from pan; remove plastic wrap and place mixture on cutting board. Using a sharp, warm knife, cut the truffle block into small squares. Mix powdered sugar and cocoa powder in a small bowl. Roll the truffles into mixture. Keep truffles refrigerated until ready to serve. They taste best at room temperature.

If you missed this program, an upcoming Adult Services program at the Bartlett Library is “Project 2-3-1: Two Boxcars, Three Blocks, One City” on Sunday, Feb. 12 at 2 p.m. Two boxcars full of escaped slaves arrived in Elgin in 1862. Most of them settled in three segregated city blocks known as The Settlement. Eventually, they merged with their white neighbors to form one city. Come in to view this documentary with a Q&A afterwards with the producer, Phil Broxham, and narrators, Ernie Broadnax and Jerry Turnquist.

For more information and a complete listing of scheduled programs, call 630.837.2855 or visit www.bartletlibrary.org.

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