

Chocolate, The Taste of Our People



During Hispanic Heritage Month, when countries like Mexico and the majority of Central America obtained their independence, I would like to place importance on a food that is loved by nearly everyone and is consumed all over the world with incredible popularity. I am talking about chocolate, which originated in Meso-America. It was considered the food of the gods and has been consumed for the past 4,000 years.

Some anthropologists have found that chocolate was consumed since 1900 B.C. by the pre-Olmecan culture in Mexico. The cocoa that was found by the people from Meso-America in tropical forests was fermented, toasted and ground. It was then prepared as a bitter beverage with vanilla, water, honey, chile and spices. The Olmecs, Mayans and Aztecs considered chocolate as something sacred and spiritual and of such importance as to be used as a form of currency.

Cocoa was taken to Europe by the Spanish in the 16th Century, and it was then later introduced to France and other countries. Each country contributed different ingredients and methods to convert it into what it is today, a world-wide loved food.

In Central Pa., there is a very talented pastry chef and chocolatier who works with chocolate in an incredible way, using the best techniques and ingredients, resulting in a marvelous final product. His name is Frederic Loraschi, born in France. He began his culinary career when he was 14 years old, working with prestigious chefs, such as Lea Linster and Bernard Loiseau (3 Michelin Stars), among others. But, it was not until he met Chef Phillippe Urraca (MOF-best worker of France) that he discovered his passion for desserts.

“I clearly discovered my passion for pastry. And I never looked back ever since – passion, craft, quality,” says Chef Loraschi.

He came to Central Pa. in 2003 when the Hershey Hotel gave him the opportunity to be the executive pastry chef. He worked with them for two years and then decided to create his own business. He still lives in Central Pa.

The origin and history of food is very important to Chef Loraschi.

“When you work with an ingredient as surprising as chocolate, the most normal thing is to want to find out its origin,” he says. “It is impossible to speak of chocolate and not talk about

México. ...It is about the chocolate – its origins, its history. It is important for me to share this with my customers. The making of chocolate is such an interesting process, from the farmers in the plantation to the chocolate bar, there are so many people and so much work involved.”

The selection of the ingredients that are used is of vital importance to Chef Loraschi.

“I am always searching, trying, tasting,” he says. “...During my trips to Mexico, I have tasted the great Mexican vanilla from Papantla and the organic coffee from the Chiapas region. I memorize these very specific flavor profiles and incorporate them in recipes that will eventually become creations for you to taste.”

Chef Loraschi has travelled to Mexico to give classes and has interacted with the best pastry chefs and chocolatiers of Mexico, like Maricu Ortiz, Luis Robledo, Fernanda Prado and Paulina Abascal, among others.

Chef Loraschi speaks perfect Spanish. Along with his wife, Diana, and two children, Julian and Luca, he speaks three languages – English, Spanish and French.

“With the explosion of social media,

everything is global,” he says. “You become more aware of different cultures and food, and this is great.”

Chef Loraschi will soon be opening a store in Harrisburg at 4615 Hillcrest St. “I wanted the store to have a factory feel, lots of windows for customers to see us working with chocolate,” he says. “A lot of people don’t realize what we do and how we do it.” The company was created in July 2005 and has grown little by little.

He has surrounded himself with good workers that have helped him grow. “My team is very important to me,” he says. “Eduardo and Daisy are very passionate about being chocolatiers – without them, I could not do everything we do. They are very special to me.”

He is very excited about the upcoming opening to the public. His plans for the future are very clear and simple: He wants to become a destination for chocolate-lovers and eventually open stores in other cities, such as Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. 📧

To learn more about these beautiful chocolates, visit federicloraschichocolate.com. Enjoy the following recipe from Chef Loraschi and his new store at 4615 Hillcrest St in Harrisburg.

Inside a large sauce-pot caramelize the granulated sugar and the corn syrup together to a light golden caramel brown color (about 160C/320F with a confectionary thermometer).

Deglaze the caramel with hot cream (that you previously warm up in a different sauce-pot with vanilla bean).

Cook again with a confectionary thermometer to 117C/242.6 F, then add butter and pour in baking pan line with baking paper (parchment).

Let cool down, cut to desire size and wrap in cellophane paper or dip in tempered chocolate.

Papantla Vanilla Caramel

- 550 g (1.2 lbs.) granulated sugar
- 550 g (1.2 lbs.) light corn syrup
- 5 g (0.01 lbs.) sea salt
- 1 each Papantla Mexican Vanilla bean (split and scraped)
- 900 g (1.98 lbs.) heavy whipping cream
- 300 g (0.66 lbs.) unsalted butter

