



FOOD-O-GRAM
BY RUKHSARA OSMAN

Cocoa tinted glasses

Like most of us, I too have a lot of fond memories tied to chocolate - from my father buying me Mars at the Titas store in Lalmatia, fighting with siblings over whether we love or hate Mimi chocolate, to daydreaming about the chocolate river in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, running to Dolce Vita after school for a scoop of chocolate ice-cream, and of course that chocolate binge after a gruesome day.



I read somewhere "Your favourite chocolate defines your time, or so you think. Some bridge the decades and the generations. They're as familiar to your granny as they are to you."

This got me wondering, do children still get a box of Quality Street when someone from England comes to visit?

Chocolate has a long history; it has been around for over 2000 years. The Mayans and the Aztecs believed it had magical properties. Hernando Cortes, the Spanish explorer, described the drink as 'a bitter drink for pigs' after tasting the Aztec chocolate drink. This then travelled to Spain, got a splash of cane sugar mixed into it and -Voila! - became the fashionable drink to the rich Europeans of the 17th century.

The Europeans believed it had medicinal, plus aphrodisiac properties (rumored that Casanova was especially fond of the stuff). In the 1700s chocolate started to be mass produced, the chocolate bar was first created in 1847 and by 1868 Nestle hit the market with milk chocolate (my favorite!).

INDULGE

The original chocolate drink was made with ground up chocolate, corn flour and flavoured with vanilla, honey or chillies. Remember the scene from the movie *Chocolat* where Juliette Binoche is seen to put a pinch of chili powder in the chocolate drink? This hot chocolate is going to be as thick as that.

(Serves 2)

Ingredients:

(4 oz.) dark chocolate, shaved
1½ cups milk
1 tbsp sugar (add more if you like)
¾ tbsp corn starch
½ tsp vanilla extract
½ tsp cinnamon
1/8 tsp sea salt
Whipped cream, optional

Method:

Place shaved chocolate in a small saucepan over low heat and add two tablespoons milk and vanilla extract. Use a wooden spoon to stir chocolate as it begins to melt. Slowly add remaining milk and stir until completely smooth. Add in sugar, corn starch, cinnamon, and sea salt, and stir until everything is dissolved and combined. Once mixture boils, let it cook for another 1-2 minutes, or until thick-

ened enough that it coats the back of your spoon. Pour into two mugs (top with whipped cream if desired) and serve immediately.

Chocolate wonton

This is supposed to be a very quick recipe. Most of the things have to be store bought. Just assemble, fry and eat! Choose your favourite type of chocolate and look for the 4-ounce size chocolate bars. The bars are often pre-cut into the perfect size squares for filling the wontons.

Ingredients:

24 wonton wrappers
1 large banana
12 (1½-inch) chocolate squares
1 large egg, beaten
Vegetable oil, for frying
Store-bought salted caramel sauce, for serv-



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Chopstick/skewer

Method:

Organise 12 wonton wrappers on a table. Cut the banana into 12 (¼-inch) slices then place one chocolate square topped with one slice of banana in the centre of each wonton wrapper. Using a brush or your fingers, brush the egg around the edges of the wonton wrappers then lay a second wrapper atop the chocolate and banana. Firmly press the edges together so the wontons are properly sealed.

Line a baking sheet with paper towels. Add at least 3 inches of oil to a large, heavy-bottomed pot.

Heat the oil to know when the oil is ready to fry. Place the chopstick/skewer in the middle of the pot. If it starts to make bubbles around the stick immediately, it is ready for

frying.

Carefully add 2 to 3 poppers to the hot oil and fry them for about two minutes, flipping as needed, until they're golden brown.

Immediately transfer the wontons to the paper towel-lined baking sheet. Repeat the frying with the remaining poppers, allowing the oil to return to 180°C between each batch.

Serve the wontons warm alongside caramel sauce for dipping.

COCOA BBQ

Ingredients:

1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 cup light brown sugar
3 tbsp chilli powder
2 tbsp salt
2 tbsp onion paste
1 tbsp garlic paste
1 tbsp dried oregano
1 tbsp dried mustard
2 tsp ginger paste
2 tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp ground allspice
2 racks (3 lb.) beef baby back ribs

Method:

Mix cocoa, sugar, and spices together in a bowl. Rub ribs generously with spice mixture, and wrap in plastic wrap; refrigerate overnight.

About two hours before you plan to serve the ribs, remove them from the refrigerator and allow the ribs come to room temperature. Heat oven to 195°C. Place ribs in a shallow roasting pan; bake until tender, about 40 minutes. Increase oven to 250° and transfer ribs to a baking sheet with a wire rack; bake curved side up and flipping once, until browned, 15-20 minutes more. Cut ribs into individual bones to serve.

EGGPLANT AND CHOCOLATE SAUCE

(Serves 6-8)

Ingredients:

3 cups olive oil
7½ cups eggplants, cut into 1 inch cubes
2 large onion, chopped