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BITS & BITES

food411
BY DENISE I. O'NEAL

Sweet on students

CALLEBAUT | America's 1st Chocolate Academy is not for dilettantes

BY JULIANNE WILL

Tomoko Ichikawa's husband went one better than a box of chocolates for their 10th anniversary. Matt Mayfield bought his wife the chance to make chocolate with some of the world's foremost experts.

"I like to do things that are very tactile," says Ichikawa, an information designer. She sews and bakes as a break from the computer screen.

But this was a whole different ball of wax paper. Ichikawa spent two days discovering chocolate with the pros at the Chocolate Academy, 600 W. Chicago, opened this fall by Zurich, Switzerland-based chocolate manufacturer Barry Callebaut. This is the first U.S. location; there are 11 other centers worldwide.

The academy is designed for professionals and staffed by award-winning chefs, including Jerome Landrieu, a top pastry chef here from Paris as a technical advisor for the academy. Students use Barry Callebaut's professional-grade chocolate, which it sources straight from the cocoa bean and produces for use in countless consumer products nationwide.

But classes at the River North academy are not the exclusive domain of pastry chefs. Anyone with a passion for chocolate and the dedication to temper it again and again for two days straight is welcome to sign up.

Like Ichikawa, Shara Bauer came to the Discovering Chocolate class without experience as a confectioner or plans to become one. A sommelier at Eno, a wine, cheese and chocolate bar in the InterContinental Hotel, Bauer seeks out artisanal truffles and candies to pair with wine flights. She attended the class to learn more about how they're made.

"I learned so much about chocolate in two days, it's crazy," Bauer said.

Students use professional equipment in class, but it's not absolutely necessary for chocolate-making, Landrieu says. Ichikawa plans to temper chocolate in



French pastry chef Jerome Landrieu puts the finishing touches on a chocolate sculpture. Landrieu is a technical advisor for the Chocolate Academy, 600 W. Chicago, which offers intensive training for pastry chefs and novices alike.

her microwave. She hopes to manage the temperature of her truffle centers by keeping them covered in her basement overnight as they set.

Of course, most of Ichikawa and Bauer's classmates were professionals. Maria Brennan, a graduate of the French Pastry School who operates Victorian Bakery out of her home in Kalamazoo, Mich., had been having trouble getting the chocolate on her Millionaire Squares just right, with that perfect snap and glossy

SWEET IMMERSION

Dates for the next Discovering Chocolate classes at the Chocolate Academy, 600 W. Chicago, are as follows:

Feb. 24 and 25

March 10 and 11

May 12 and 13

The classes are open to the public. The cost is \$580. For more information, call (866) 443-0437.

appearance.

Brennan was thrilled to have the opportunity to learn from some of the world's foremost experts in chocolate.

"They have made all the mistakes as well or had seen the mistakes and knew how to fix it," Brennan said. In this case, a slight adjustment in temperature while tempering made all the difference.

Beyond Discovering Chocolate, the academy's class lineup is designed for Barry Callebaut's customers — serious chefs — and courses count as continuing education. In Creating Chocolate Showpieces, for example, Landrieu shares the technique behind his own exquisite chocolate sculptures, which he enters in international competitions.

While Landrieu's experience is formidable, his manner is personable. At the first level, Landrieu's goal is to teach his students "just to understand [what is] inside the chocolate, what's happening when we work with chocolate," he says.

Ichikawa admitted to feeling intimidated before she signed up. Chocolate-making is not a piece of cake.

"There's a lot of science in the classroom," she said. "But I was OK with that. If I didn't understand, I could keep asking."

By the second day, Ichikawa says, everyone was relaxed and laughing.

"How can you not laugh around chocolate?" she said.

Julianne Will is a Chicago free-lance writer.



Chef Beverly Kim of Opera will conduct a dessert class Sunday.

Holiday desserts

Chef Beverly Kim of Opera, 1301 S. Wabash, leads a holiday dessert class at 11:30 a.m. Sunday; \$30, includes food and wine samples. Recipes include green tea tiramisu, chocolate lava cake and five spice-roasted banana ice cream. (312) 461-0161.

Eat for a cause

Room21, 2110 S. Wabash, and Park 52, 5201 S. Harper, are asking visitors to add a donation to their check this month in support of Ronald McDonald House Charities. The restaurants also are accepting donations during December of laundry detergent, cleaning supplies, snacks and Jewel gift cards.

Fifty-two pickup

A La Card Chicago's 2009 restaurant cards offer \$10 off meals at 52 area restaurants; \$30. A dollar from the sale of each deck will support Common Threads, chef Art Smith's charity. For information, visit www.alacardchicago.com.

Holiday cookies

Chef Nadia Tilkian of Majeau Restaurant, 30 S. Prospect, Clarendon Hills, conducts a children's holiday cookie class at noon Sunday. (630) 794-8900.

Farm in the city

Tuesday is the last day for Chicago's Downtown Farmstand, 66 E. Randolph — but the market, opened in October as a pilot project of the city's Cultural Affairs Department, will reopen and stay open permanently Feb. 3. The market carries produce from farms within 250 miles of Chicago as well as dry and baked goods.

CHOCOLATE MACARONS

Callebaut strongly recommends using a household kitchen scale for this recipe. Metric measurements are included.

MAKES 50 SERVINGS

- 7 egg whites
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 3½ tablespoons (50 grams) sugar
- 2 cups (450 grams) confectioners' sugar
- 1½ cups (250 grams) almond flour (see Note)
- 2½ tablespoons (35 grams) cocoa powder

CHOCOLATE GANACHE FILLING:
1½ cups (250 grams) heavy cream

- 7 ounces (200 grams) Callebaut 811 Dark Chocolate (see Note)
- 2½ tablespoons (35 grams) butter, softened

Whip the egg whites on high until very stiff. Turn the mixer to low and slowly add the lemon juice. Mix well on high speed.

Turn down the mixer again to low and slowly add the granulated sugar. Mix on high until stiff.

Sift together the confectioners' sugar, almond flour and cocoa powder and fold gently into the whipped egg white mixture. Stir with a spatula until the batter is shiny.

Use a piping bag with a round tip to pipe small 1-inch disks onto a parchment

paper-lined baking sheet.

Allow unbaked macarons to rest at room temperature for 20 minutes. Bake at 300 degrees for 12 minutes. Remove and cool.

For the ganache: Heat the cream almost to boiling. Place the chocolate in a heat-proof bowl and pour the heated cream over the chocolate. Allow the heat to melt the chocolate for 5 minutes.

Whisk the chocolate and cream until it becomes shiny and no more cream is visible. Add in the softened butter and mix well to make a smooth ganache. Allow to rest for an hour before using.

To assemble: Take two macarons and pipe a small amount of chocolate ganache on the flat side of one macaron. Cover with second macaron to make a

sandwich.

Any macarons not consumed within 1 day can be wrapped in plastic and stored in the freezer for up to a month.

Note: Almond flour (sometimes called almond meal) can be found at health food stores, Whole Foods, Trader Joe's and in the organic aisle of Jewel. You can make your own by grinding whole almonds in a food processor. Do not over-grind or it will turn into a paste.

Note: Callebaut chocolate is sold in plastic-wrapped blocks at Whole Foods. *Chocolate Academy*

Nutrition facts per serving: 77 calories, 4 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 6 mg cholesterol, 9 g carbohydrates, 3 g protein, 46 mg sodium, 0 g fiber

SWAP SHOP BY SANDY THORN CLARK

Cooking up hostess gifts doesn't have to be chore

With the holidays approaching, Swap Shop is filling requests for BLT Dip for J.E. of Chicago, cheese balls or logs for A.H. of Evanston, quick appetizers for S.R. of Chicago, Oatmeal Scotchies for L.B. of Melrose Park and Sole Veronique from the California Table Grape Commission for M.A. of Tinley Park, who requested an easy, fail-safe fish recipe she could make for her boyfriend and his parents on Christmas Eve.

Susan Peterson of Chicago and Mary Alice Lehman of Northlake sent similar recipes for chewy or crispy scotchies, an answer for readers still looking for interesting recipes for cookie swaps or gift-giving.

Appetizers and cheese ball recipes include:

◆ For 3 cups of BLT Dip, sent by Patty Contreras of Lemont: In medium bowl, combine 1 cup mayonnaise, 1 cup sour cream, 2 tomatoes (drained and diced), and 1 pound bacon (fried crisp, drained and crumbled). Spread on bottom of a pie plate or other small serving dish. Top with shredded lettuce. Serve with crisp bread or crackers.

◆ For 24 servings of Gouda Cheese Logs, from Betty Crocker: Mix 1 (8-ounce) tub soft cream cheese and 2 cups shredded Gouda or Colby cheese until blended. Stir in ¼ cup chopped fresh chives, ¼ cup sliced sun-dried tomatoes in oil and ¼ teaspoon garlic powder. Shape mixture into small logs

or 1 large ball. Roll in ¼ cup finely chopped fresh parsley. Wrap in plastic wrap; refrigerate at least 2 hours until firm. Serve with crackers.

◆ For 4 servings of Baked Potato Dip, from Campbell's Kitchen: Mix 1 can condensed cream of potato soup, 1 (16-ounce) container sour cream, 1 (3-ounce) jar real bacon bits, 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese, 1 bunch scallions (chopped) and salt and pepper to taste. Immediately or after refrigerating, serve with chips or crackers.

Requests

Years ago I had a recipe for Impossible Dutch Apple Pie, which made its own bottom crust and had a streusel topping. Does someone still have it and be willing to share it?

T.C., Chicago

I would love a recipe for Black Forest cake that includes cherry pie filling.

M.B., Wheeling

Please share a recipe for popovers.

A.H., Chicago

Send recipes and requests to: Swap Shop, Chicago Sun-Times, 350 N. Orleans, 9th Floor, Chicago 60654 or by e-mail, swapshop@suntimes.com.

All mail must include a daytime telephone number. Sorry, requests can't be answered personally.



SOLE VERONIQUE

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

- 6 large (about 1½ pounds) fresh sole fillets
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1 small onion slice
- 2 to 3 slices fresh lemon
- Sprig of thyme
- 5 to 6 peppercorns
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon flour
- ½ cup half-and-half
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper
- 1 cup green seedless grapes
- ½ teaspoon grated lemon zest

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Lightly butter a glass or ceramic ovenproof baking dish. Fold the fillets in half, skin side up. Place fillets in prepared dish with the wine, onion, lemon slices, thyme

and peppercorns. Cover dish loosely with foil; bake for 16 to 18 minutes or until the fish is just cooked through. Carefully lift fish from pan and place on warm serving dish. Strain any cooking liquids and reserve. Discard the solids.

To make the sauce, melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in flour and cook until the roux is bubbly and golden brown. Remove the pan from heat and pour in strained cooking liquids. Stir well. Return pan to heat, add half-and-half and simmer for 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Season with salt and white pepper. Add grapes and lemon zest. Spoon sauce over sole and serve immediately. *California Table Grape Commission*

Nutrition facts per serving: 235 calories, 11 g fat, 4 g saturated fat, 81 mg cholesterol, 8 g carbohydrates, 23 g protein, 262 mg sodium, 1 g fiber

OATMEAL SCOTCHIES

MAKES 48 COOKIES

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar

- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract or grated orange peel
- 3 cups quick or old-fashioned oats
- 2 cups (12-ounce package) butterscotch-flavored morsels

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In small bowl, combine flour,

baking soda, salt and cinnamon; set aside. In large mixer bowl, beat butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, eggs and vanilla (or orange peel) until creamy. Gradually beat in flour mixture. Stir in oats and butterscotch morsels. Drop by rounded tablespoon onto ungreased baking sheets. Bake for 7 to 8 minutes for chewy cook-

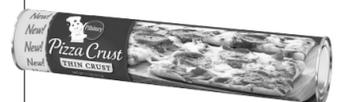
ies or 9 to 10 minutes for crispy cookies. Let stand for 2 minutes; remove to wire racks to cool completely.

Susan Peterson

Nutrition facts per cookie: 143 calories, 7 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 20 mg cholesterol, 17 g carbohydrates, 1 g protein, 65 mg sodium, 1 g fiber

outtathebox

BY DENISE I. O'NEAL



PILLSBURY THIN PIZZA CRUST

★★★

Suggested retail: \$2.49 for 1 (11-ounce) container

Per 1 (2.2-ounce) serving: 180 calories, 5 g fat, 360 mg sodium, 29 g carbohydrates

Pizza is one item I never thought I could make from scratch. Not that I haven't tried, but I just couldn't get the crust right.

Not a problem anymore. Pillsbury's Thin Crust Pizza Crust makes the task easy and enjoyable, especially if you have young ones at home.

I have enjoyed this product so much, I now make my teenage son pizza once a week. Unroll the crust, add your favorite toppings and pop it in the oven.

The crust bakes up golden brown and delicious. For a flavored crust, you can brush it with butter and sprinkle with Italian seasonings.

Making your own pizza gives you control over the flavors and lets the kids have a hand in making it as well. Be creative about toppings and make it a family affair.

Ever want to try a gourmet pizza? How about a dessert pizza? Now you can. The sky's the limit.

Pillsbury has posted recipes using the crust at www.pillsbury.com.

Pillsbury pizza crusts are available in the refrigerated section of most grocery stores. doneal@suntimes.com