

Food+Chef

MAGAZINE

How to Make:
COQ AU VIN

Maitre Chocolatiere

Yves Landry

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the truth about
FRIJOLES



CHOCOLATE DREAMS

Chocolate and Lovers

By: Mike Alexander



Saint Valentine's is not as big a day here in France as it perhaps is in some other countries though in the tiny village of St Valentin they have capitalized on the event. They hold an annual fair making sure the post office is open so lovers can get their cards stamped with an official St Valentin post mark. Of course at a fair of this nature, things would not be complete without chocolate and there are normally several chocolate makers selling their products. The really big chocolate get together takes place in Paris at the annual Salon du Chocolate in October and attracts upwards of ten thousand visitors per day. It features a full scale fashion show with the models appearing in chocolate dresses and last year showed off a life size chocolate airplane.

Chocolate consumption in France extends far beyond Valentine's Day. Most towns and all cities will have a proliferation of chocolate shops with exquisitely made up window displays. Visiting friends, family and neighbors is the glue that holds French society together and it is customary to bear gifts when visiting. Often this will take the form of a box of chocolates and local chocolatiers have an enticing variety of hand made produce to present to one's host. Even if just popping in for a quick cup of coffee, it is not unusual to give a tiny box of chocolates containing perhaps just two or three miniature works of

art.

The annual world chocolate trade is worth a massive \$83 billion per year, with Europeans consuming very nearly half of that. That figure represents more than the gross domestic product of one hundred and thirty different countries. It seems that the Swiss have the largest appetite for chocolate with the average annual consumption being 11.9 kilograms per person, way above us abstemious French with our delicate little 6.8 kilograms annually.



CHOCOLATERIE

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YVES LANDRY



Yves Landry is a master chocolate maker based in the village of Villeneuve-d'Ornon just to the west of Bordeaux. He has been in the chocolate making business fifty years and so it was a delight to be shown around his workshop and learn some of the less obvious details of this profession whilst watching a master craftsman at work. Like all the best food professionals, he insists that the quality of the raw materials is crucial. Yves uses chocolate from many different cocoa producing countries including Tanzania, Peru and Ghana but his favorite comes from the small island of Sao Tomé in the Bay of Guinea. He also insists that freshness is essential and refuses to ever freeze any of his produce.



A master chocolatier needs to be more than just a wizard at synthesizing ingredients. He also needs to be a clever designer and gifted sculptor. Yves had hoped to study at the famous University des Beaux Arts but when he was unable to fulfill that dream he apprenticed to a patissier/chocolatier. That is when he developed a love of working with chocolate that has not diminished for half a century. Visiting his factory is more like stepping into an artist's studio than a work shop. He works alone and when I arrived he was putting the finishes touches to a life sized horses head in dark chocolate. In the corner stood a giant chocolate wine bottle, made for one of the great Bordeaux wine estates, whilst a hand painted twenty kilo Easter egg stood in another corner.

As with many masters of their trade, Yves has a signature product that is his favorite, both to make and to eat. Yves specializes in Guinettes Bordelaises. These dainty little offerings consist of cherries macerated in Armagnac before being dipped in dark molten chocolate and shaped back to the form of a cherry. Each year he visits the best cherry producers and wanders through the orchards sampling their fruit until satisfied he has found the finest available. I have tasted many liqueur chocolates but these were in a class of

their own. He told me that the secret lies in using fresh fruit where most producers use only crystallized cherries. Judging by the queue of people buying them in his small shop, I was not the only one to appreciate them.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike has lived and worked in France for the past twelve years. Although he writes on a broad range of subjects ranging from nature to gardening, Mike has found himself being drawn more and more into the field of food writing. Here cooking goes beyond passion and takes on an almost mythical life of its own. Such feeling is infectious and when embraced, provides a wonderful window both into French culture and the lives of the people that live here.