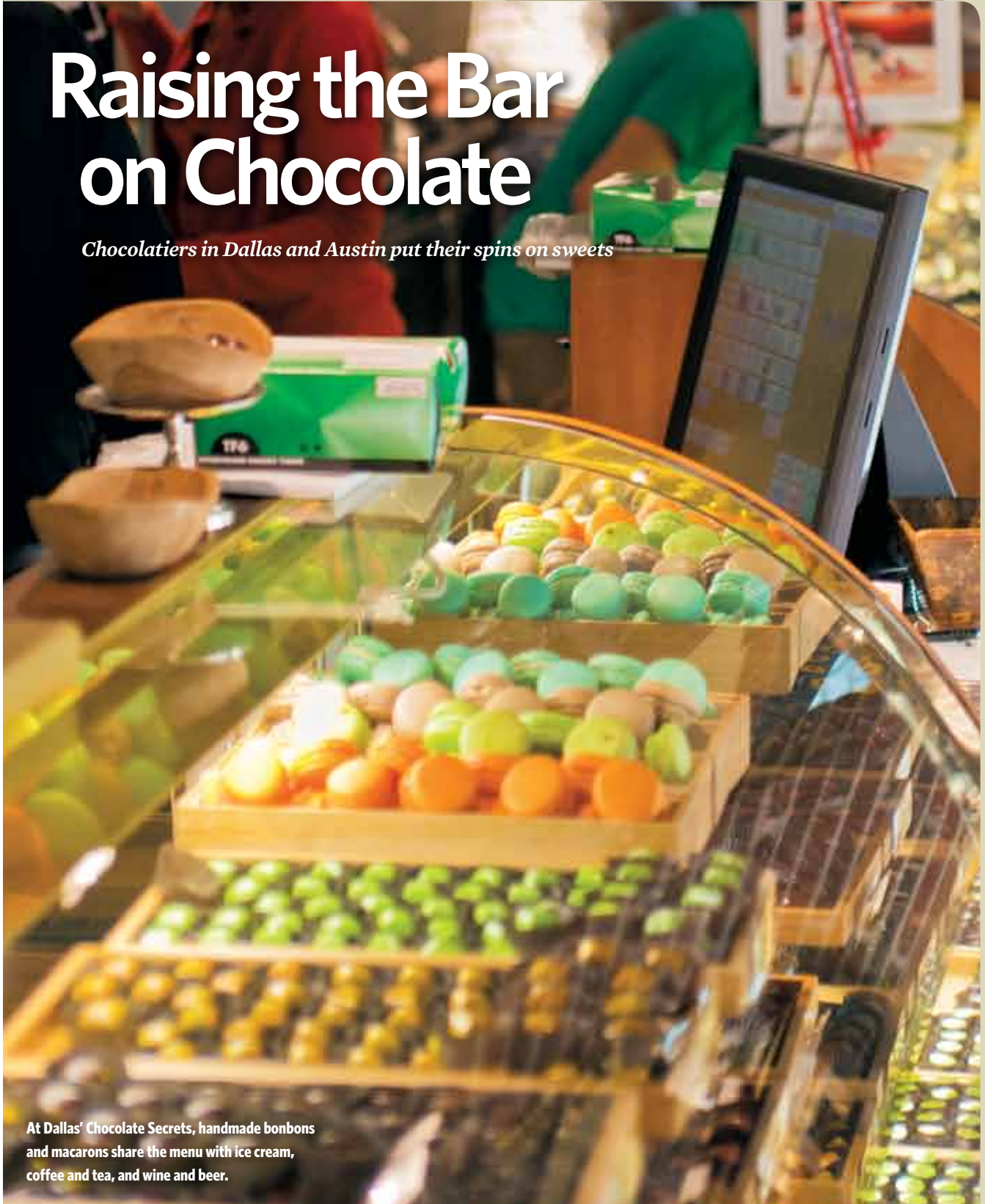


Raising the Bar on Chocolate

Chocolatiers in Dallas and Austin put their spins on sweets



At Dallas' Chocolate Secrets, handmade bonbons and macarons share the menu with ice cream, coffee and tea, and wine and beer.



Dude, Sweet Chocolate's original location in Oak Cliff has proven so popular that the shop recently opened branches in Fort Worth and North Dallas.

CHOCOLATE HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH the month of February. Like the Aztec Emperor Montezuma, who is said to have drunk more than 50 cups of liquid chocolate daily for its aphrodisiacal properties, those looking to express sweet sentiments or celebrate love have long extolled chocolate in its many forms.

Perhaps nowhere in Texas are there more chocolate fanatics than in Dallas, where the chocolate business has grown to Aztec proportions in just a few short years. Dallasites have embraced the art of candymaking with zeal and a passion for high-quality—and often bizarre—ingredients.

“Dallas has a relatively young chocolate scene, so the local chocolatiers are free to experiment however they want,” says Sander Wolf, founder of DallasChocolate.org, a website devoted to promoting

artisan chocolate in the city. “The chocolatiers have formed an interactive community, and it’s really fun to watch (and eat) everything that’s going on,” says Sander, whose organization offers chocolate-sampling tours of the city and hosts an annual chocolate conference and festival in the fall. “When you come to Dallas for chocolate, you won’t go home hungry!” Sander exclaims.

Along with traditional chocolates, this cocoa-crazed city has seen everything from truffles made with curry, blue

cheese, bacon, and gummy bears to chocolates flirting with too-pretty-to-eat status, like the handcrafted works of art coming out of CocoAndré Chocolatier in Oak Cliff.

Chocolate shops have opened all across the Metroplex, including Elegantly Chocolate in Carrollton (try the raspberry-and-dark-chocolate floret cups), Sublime Chocolate in Allen, and The Dark Chocolate Bakery, which operates a mail-order confectionary out of Dallas.

Chocolate Secrets

Love and chocolate go hand in hand for Kate Weiser, chocolatier and executive pastry chef at Chocolate Secrets, an upscale chocolate boutique in Dallas’ Uptown area that entices customers with organic, brightly colored treats that resemble jewels. Not only did it take this Kansas City transplant nearly two years to perfect the process of hand-painting her bonbons, but she recently celebrated her second anniversary with her husband and unofficial taste tester.

“I like to say that my husband fell in love with me through chocolate,” Kate



Yes, these chocolate jewels from Chocolate Secrets are edible. And delicious.

says with a laugh. Kate notes that her favorite Valentine’s treats are the painted, heart-shaped bonbons and the candies made with sea salt and caramel, which feature salty caramel with a chocolate outer shell painted with colored cocoa butter. “Chocolate is really a celebration of life and a celebration of love,” says Kate. “We’ve had a lot of love stories start

at our store; I’ve been part of five proposals!” Go to www.chocolatesecrets.net.

Dude, Sweet Chocolate

When it comes to funky flavor combinations, few can compete with Katherine Clapner, chef and co-owner of Dude, Sweet Chocolate. Her creative recipes can convert even the most devout chocolate purist into a daring chocoholic. “I just make what I like and try to turn people on to things they wouldn’t normally find,” says Katherine, who began selling

her chocolates at farmers’ markets before opening her storefront. “Just because it’s a weird ingredient doesn’t mean it tastes weird in the end. Everything is put in there for a reason.”

Take her Albatross fudge, for instance. Although a few customers are still leery of its combination of dehydrated blue cheese and sea salt, this delicately crunchy fudge (named for a popular

Monty Python skit) is a top seller with its balance of creamy chocolate and pungent cheese. Katherine also offers an artisan sampler that includes flavors like Louisiana tobacco and cognac, beet and olive oil, and Peruvian purple corn.

After all, in chocolate as in love and romance, rules are made to be broken. Go to www.dudesweetchocolate.com.

—Kristy Alpert

Succumbing to the Temptress

WHEN LAKEWOOD BREWING Company in Garland debuted an Imperial Milk Stout called the Temptress to a crowd of beer aficionados at a local festival, no one was prepared for the crowd’s intense reaction. Al-



though there is no actual chocolate in this creamy, sweet beer, it’s brewed with Madagascar bourbon vanilla and roasted

chocolate malt, giving it a rich chocolate flavor with a smooth, caramel finish that attracted admirers in droves.

The beer is great in a glass, but perhaps the true testament to the Temptress is what people are doing with it: Zio Carlo Magnolia Brew Pub in Fort Worth has created a Temptress chocolate mousse, Goodfriend Beer Garden and Burger House in Lakewood serves a Temptress ice cream float, and The Common Table in Dallas makes a cherry Temptress milkshake with bourbon and espresso-spiked whipped cream.

—Kristy Alpert

PHOTOS: © ROBERT HART

A little dinner.
A little dance.
A little Hill Country
Romanze.

Get FREE Official Visitor Info Kit

Take a break from your world. And reconnect in ours. We’re just secluded enough, with a beguiling mix of diversions that will take your minds off your cares and focus them firmly on each other. Charming guesthouses, B&Bs and inns. Delightful wine tours. Lazy carriage rides. Luxurious His and Hers spa treatments. Live music of all kinds. And soft candlelit dinners with surprisingly diverse cuisine. All set in the natural beauty and laid-back atmosphere of the Texas Hill Country. So take your partner. And come dance to the heartbeat of Fredericksburg. ★

VisitFredericksburgTX.com | 866 997 3600

Fredericksburg
THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY
German Heritage. Texan Hospitality.

Franklin Mountains State Park

Lose Yourself in Adventure

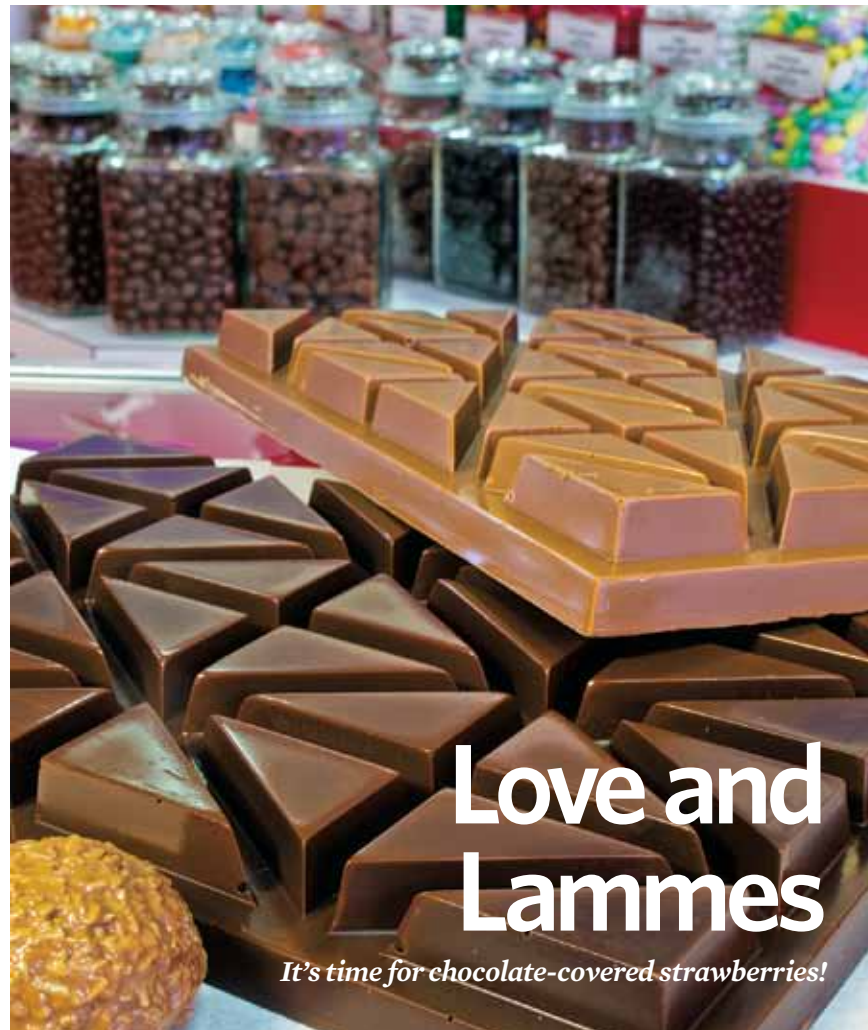
The only Texas city with a 37-square-mile state park in the middle of town



EL PASO
TEXAS

Free adventure guide: 800-351-6024
visitelpaso.com

Taste



Love and Lammes

It's time for chocolate-covered strawberries!

AUSTIN'S 125-YEAR-OLD LAMMES CANDIES CRANKS OUT ABOUT a quarter-million pounds of mouth-watering chocolates each year using ingredients such as peanuts, cashews, roasted almonds, caramel, orange peels, peppermints, and habanero peppers. But business really heats up in February, when chocolate-lovers purchase nearly 20,000 pounds of plump, milk-chocolate-covered strawberries in honor of Valentine's Day.

Make it!
Chocolate-covered-strawberry recipe at texashighways.com/thtaste

Lammes first started making chocolate-covered strawberries in the late 1970s, but at first they weren't popular with customers, explains company President Pam Teich, whose great-great grandfather, William Wirt Lamme, founded the confectionary in 1878. Pam says that originally, her father, David

Lamme Teich, made the strawberries with liquid centers similar to what you'd find with chocolate-covered cherries, so "they were really messy." But the real obstacle was that people weren't familiar

Originally called **Red Front Candy Factory**, Lammes adopted its current name in 1885.

Customers purchase nearly **20,000 pounds** of **chocolate-covered strawberries** every February in honor of **Valentine's Day**.



with the combination of flavors, she says. "The first time we offered samples of chocolate-covered strawberries, we couldn't get anybody to try them," adds employee Mildred Walston, who began working for the iconic candy-maker 73 years ago when it had just one store in downtown Austin. That changed quickly, she says, and these days they're

a bestseller, along with the popular Longhorns, a mix of caramel and pecans enrobed in milk or dark chocolate.

Lammes sells 100,000 pounds of Longhorns annually, says Pam, and customers have sent them to chocolate-lovers as

Lammes' Airport Boulevard location in Austin draws chocolate-lovers year round.

pedigreed as Queen Elizabeth and Katherine Hepburn. "And President Lyndon Johnson actually ordered Longhorns to be delivered to the White House," she says.

Another popular Lammes candy, the now-famous "Texas Chewie" pralines, were first made in 1892 using pecans from trees growing on the banks of Austin's Lady Bird Lake. The buttery, chewy pralines have long ranked #1 with customers, but prior to the 1920s they were available only by special request.

Lammes Candies today has five Austin-area locations and a vibrant online presence. But considering that William Wirt Lamme lost his confectionary in an 1885 poker game (only to have his son buy it back), we're lucky to savor Lammes Candies' sweets at all. "This part of our family lore was a secret for a long time," says Pam. "I would have liked to be a fly on the wall during that game."

Call Lammes Candies at 800/252-1885; www.lammes.com. —Mary O. Parker

WALK IN SWAGGER OUT



The women who shaped Texas have worn every kind of shoe – and boot. When you learn what they accomplished, you'll have something new to brag about – and – you might just hear a jingle on your shoe.

Discover *Women Shaping Texas*, on exhibit December 8, 2012-May 19, 2013.

Start your visit at TheSTORYofTEXAS.com



BULLOCK TEXAS
STATE HISTORY MUSEUM

PHOTOS: J. GRIFFIS SMITH

What's Cooking?

Creating community in the kitchen

SINCE I BEGAN TAKING COOKING CLASSES A FEW years ago, I've learned how to finely dice an onion with a few strategic knife cuts, how to use a pillowcase as a makeshift salad spinner, and how Elizabethan chefs relied on fleet-footed canines called turnspit dogs to power their rotating barbecue spits. But these gems can't compare to the lesson bestowed upon students in one of Central Market's recent grilling classes in Austin, in which chef Adam Perry Lang tenderized a standing rib roast with a baseball bat. "Now you know why we call the front row 'the splash zone,'" says Cooking School Manager Meredith Beeman.

These days, she says, the popularity of "hands-on" classes has exploded, especially as cooking has become more popular among people in their 20s and 30s. "Students say they hope to invite friends and family to their homes and give them the gift of preparing a great meal," says Meredith.

Just as a home-cooked meal makes a great gift, so does

a cooking class, especially for Valentine's Day, an oft-pressurized holiday that at its heart, focuses on shared experiences. At a recent Lebanese-food cooking class in Austin hosted by chef Anissa Helou, a table of strangers became friends over three hours of listening, laughing, and eating. By night's end, we were toasting to one couple's upcoming nuptials. Central Market's classes are posted at www.centralmarket.com.

See!

Lebanese mezza recipes at texashighways.com/thtaste



A Lebanese mezza spread at Central Market's Cooking School.

—Lori Moffatt

BIG BEND: NO PLACE TO THINK SMALL.



VISITBIGBEND.COM

Start planning your Big Bend trip here:

