

Origin and History of Giving a Box of Valentine Chocolate

Valentine's Day is traditionally a day we celebrate the people in our lives by giving them a box of chocolate. It says we love you and care about you. But why do we give chocolates on Valentine's Day?

The history of chocolate and love is an ancient tradition. The Mayans may have been the first to connect chocolate and love, by sipping chocolate beverages at their marriage ceremonies.

In the 16th century Montezuma linked chocolate and love. He believed that chocolate was an aphrodisiac. He may have been on to something. Most of the claims that chocolate is an aphrodisiac are due to 3 chemicals in chocolate which are theobromine, tryptophan and phenethylamine. Theobromine is a stimulant that increases the heart rate but decreases blood pressure. Phenethylamine makes you feel good. Tryptophan produces a feeling of ecstasy. Science however does not confirm that chocolates creates desire, but what we believe in itself is a powerful stimulant. So chocolate's aphrodisiac qualities may be more psychological than physiological.

Victorian England saw that chocolate, love and seduction were connected. In the Victorian era sugar became less expensive and was added to chocolate to decrease the bitterness and make it palatable and taste good. During that time Richard Cadbury was highly innovative and he used surplus cocoa butter to make "eating chocolate" (chocolate candy). Previously the Cadbury chocolate business was making "drinking chocolate". In 1861, in England, Cadbury created "The Fancy Box", which was the first box of chocolates. Then in 1868, Cadbury created the first heart-shaped box of chocolates. Back then, Victorian England was in to Cupids and lace, and very fancy boxes. Richard Cadbury went a step further and suggested reusing the boxes for storing love letters and trinkets. I guess he was not only an innovative food scientist but also an environmentalist by repurposing his candy boxes! Richard Cadbury brought chocolate and Valentine's Day together with his heart shaped box.

Here in the United States, Hershey introduced the Hershey kiss in 1907. In the 1920's, Russell Stover took Cadbury's concept a step further and marketed their red foil heart-shaped boxes to department stores in the Midwest. Now everyone can enjoy chocolates on Valentine's Day.

An interesting statistics is that 59% of spouses give their husband or wife Valentine gifts and 85% of parents give their kids Valentine gifts.

The dietitian in me wants to remind you that not only is a box of chocolates a tasty, sensory experience of flavors and textures, but that chocolate also is nutrient rich and has antioxidants. At Painted Turtle I created a healthy mix of dark chocolate, almonds, cherries, blueberries, and cranberries, all of which are high in antioxidants. February is heart healthy month and chocolate has some healing powers! Just don't consume that big heart box of chocolates in one day. Savor each piece of chocolate.

Should you wish to give a special box of chocolates to your loved ones and friends, Painted Turtle Chocolatier is offering you 15% off any of our boxed Valentine chocolates.

You can come to the shop, look at our website, or call us and order.

Wishing you a sweet and Happy Valentine's Day!

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