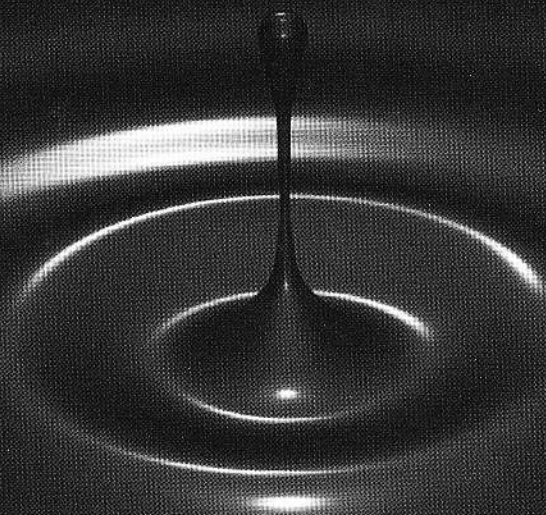


Shara Aaron and Monica Bearden

# Chocolate

A  
*Healthy Passion*



**T**HE WORLD LOVES CHOCOLATE, and based on recent scientific findings, chocolate loves us back. Today, science has proved what was revealed to ancient civilizations so long ago: chocolate has healing powers. At the end of the 1990's, Shara Aaron and Monica Bearden, authors of *Chocolate - A Healthy Passion*, were among the first to communicate to the media the news that dark chocolate may enhance health.

*Traditional Mayan  
Hot Chocolate*

(Makes about 6-8 servings)

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 chile pepper, cut in half, seeds removed (use gloves)
- 5 cups whole or nonfat milk
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 8 ounces bittersweet chocolate
- 2 tablespoons sugar or honey, or to taste
- 1 tablespoon almonds or hazelnuts, ground extra fine
- Whipped cream

**DIRECTIONS**

1. In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, add chile pepper to boiling water. Cook until liquid is reduced to 1 cup.
2. Remove chile pepper; strain water and set aside.
3. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, combine milk, vanilla bean, and cinnamon stick until bubbles appear around the edge.
4. Reduce heat to low; add chocolate and sugar or honey; whisk occasionally until chocolate is melted and sugar dissolves.
5. Turn off heat; remove vanilla bean and cinnamon stick.
6. Add chile-infused water, a little at a time, tasting to make sure the flavor isn't too strong. If the chocolate is too thick, thin with a little more milk.
7. Serve in small cups and top with a sprinkle of ground almonds or hazelnuts and whipped cream.

*Chocolate Ganache*

**INGREDIENTS**

- 6 ounces semisweet or bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
- ½ to ¾ cup heavy cream

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Melt the chocolate until it reaches a temperature of about 120° F in a bowl over a pot of simmering water or in the top of a double boiler.
2. Bring the cream to a boil in a small saucepan then remove from heat and cool in a stainless steel bowl.
3. When the cream has cooled to about 115° F, slowly pour the chocolate into the cream (the temperature of the chocolate should not be lower than 110° F; if so, briefly reheat it to 115° F). Use a candy thermometer.
4. As you pour, stir with a rubber spatula, thoroughly mixing the chocolate into the cream. The mixture will thicken and should be smooth and shiny.
5. Cool to room temperature. If cooling in a refrigerator to room temperature, cover with plastic wrap.
6. Once cooled the consistency of the ganache best suited for making truffles is that of peanut butter or slightly stiffer.

*Decadent Chocolate Truffles*

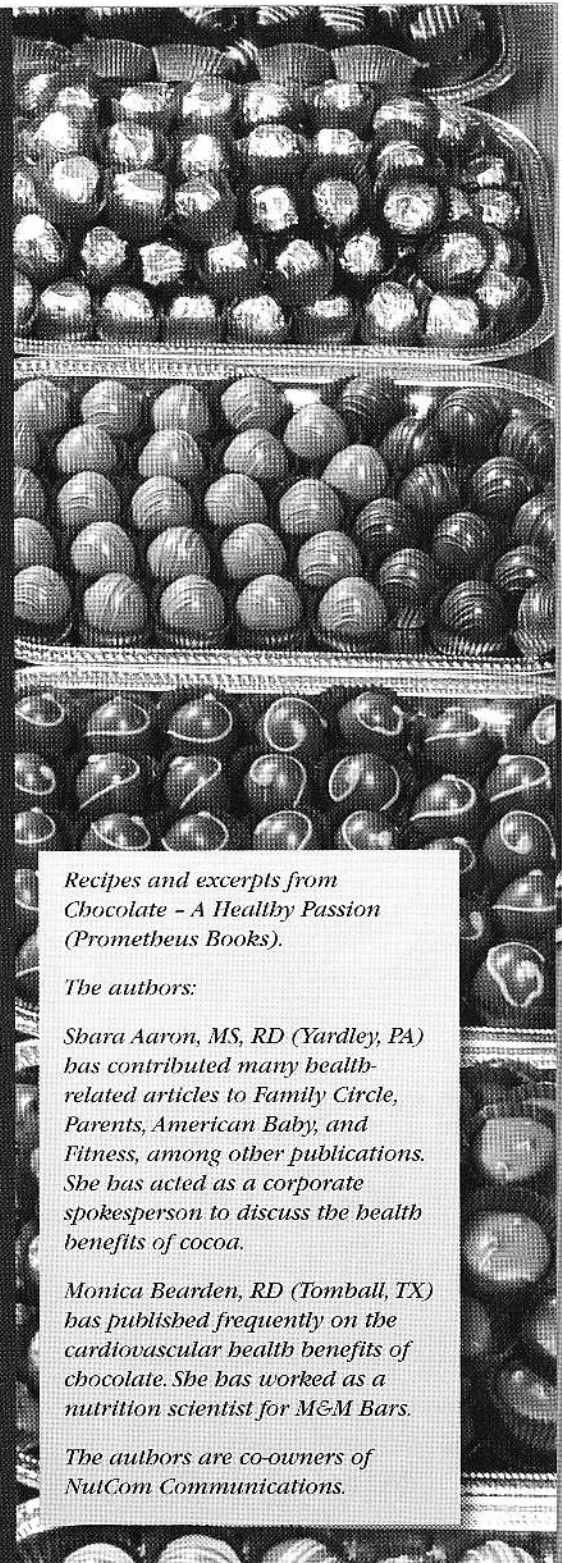
**INGREDIENTS**

Ganache (see ganache recipe)

Semisweet or bittersweet chocolate ranging from 60%-70% cocoa - the chocolate should be melted

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Roll about ½ teaspoon of ganache into a ball between your palms.
2. Place balls on a cookie sheet lined with parchment or aluminum foil.
3. Using a fork, immerse ganache balls in melted chocolate one at a time. Make sure to completely coat with chocolate.
4. Place in the refrigerator and keep cool until ready to eat.



*Recipes and excerpts from  
Chocolate - A Healthy Passion  
(Prometheus Books).*

*The authors:*

*Sbara Aaron, MS, RD (Yardley, PA) has contributed many health-related articles to Family Circle, Parents, American Baby, and Fitness, among other publications. She has acted as a corporate spokesperson to discuss the health benefits of cocoa.*

*Monica Bearden, RD (Tomball, TX) has published frequently on the cardiovascular health benefits of chocolate. She has worked as a nutrition scientist for M&M Bars.*

*The authors are co-owners of  
NutCom Communications.*

Cacao beans, the source of cocoa, are particularly rich in phytonutrients called flavanols. Flavanols attracted interest from chocolate companies when their scientists discovered that the compounds were similar to those in tea, which had already been shown to provide health benefits. Cocoa is believed to be special because of its flavanol molecular structures which act as antioxidants and guard against

diseases such as heart disease and cancer. They also protect blood vessels for more efficient blood flow – a benefit for all your organs.

Why do women have a love affair with chocolate? The mood-elevating benefit of chocolate is a phenomenon that the true chocolate lover has experienced and may have scientific support. One study

supports the idea that chocolate may act as an anti-depressant! The sensory experience – merely looking, smelling and tasting a good, rich piece of chocolate or dessert – can release serotonin in the brain, a feel-good hormone that can improve one's mood. This unique sensory experience created by the combination of rich, tantalizing flavors, and a melt-in-your-mouth texture is rivaled by no other.