

# Chocolate lovers get sweet taste of history

By R.J. Igelzi 1:40 P.M. MAY 4, 2013



From left, Glen Gieger and his wife Rema Gieger watch with their daughters Briahna, 5, and McKenna, 7, as demonstrators with the Mars Chocolate History Ambassadors show the historical process of how chocolate used based on a recipe from the 1750's to be made into a drink. The demonstrations were held at the second annual Chocolate Festival held at the Maritime Museum of San Diego.

SAN DIEGO — Emily Hayden's pizza creation was not your typical Friday night takeout fare. However, to her taste buds, it was no less delectable.

"I think this is going to taste really good," said the 7-year-old as she instructed pizza attendants to mound chocolate frosting, marshmallows, M&Ms, crushed Oreos and a few jelly beans onto a giant sugar cookie crust. "Oh look. Mine's even pretty."

Hayden was one of dozens of child and adult chocolate lovers who gathered at the San Diego Maritime Museum on Saturday for the second annual Chocolate Festival.

On the upper deck of the steam ferry Berkeley, festivalgoers were able to touch, taste, smell and experience chocolate goodies of all forms and flavors. Elegant artisan chocolates infused with fruit, herbs and spices wowed the crowd, as did sea salt toffees chock-full of nuts grown in San Diego County.

Other favorites were creamy gluten-free brownies, rich mousse and chewy chocolate chip cookies. However, the most interesting was the American Heritage Chocolate drink, an authentic historic recipe made by Mars Chocolate North America.

Before the late 1800s, chocolate was most often consumed as a liquid such as this. The warm chocolate beverage, with a touch of cinnamon, vanilla, nutmeg, orange peel and anise, is much richer than today's hot chocolate but not as sweet.

"I'm in heaven. There's chocolate everywhere I look," said Heather Costas, of Chula Vista, who accompanied her daughter and mother to the festival. "I admit it, I'm a chocoholic. But I can think of a lot worse things I could be addicted to."

Besides building chocolate pizzas, other children's activities included chocolate bingo, a "name that candy bar" game and marshmallow decorating using edible inks.

For the adults — and an additional \$12 — there were chocolate pairings with wine and Karl Strauss beer. Vista-based California Fruit Wine Company featured three different wines which were coupled with chocolates by David Bacco Chocolatier.

Raspberry wine was matched with a lemongrass-flavored bittersweet chocolate. Blueberry wine partnered with a fresh tarragon and licorice root bittersweet chocolate ganache. While a pumpkin spice wine was coupled with a lemon marzipan.

"When you pair chocolate and wine or beer, you're looking for characteristics that will compliment each other and bring out the best flavors in each," said Brian Haghghi, co-founder of California Fruit Wine Company. "The tastes should work together as a team and make each other better and different."

The festival was more than just a delicious sugar high. It also was a history lesson. A team of Mars Chocolate "history ambassadors" told the cocoa bean-to-beverage story, demonstrating the process with authentic tools including a hot stone metate, winnowing baskets, chocolate drink pots and stirrers.

"Chocolate came here by ship in the 16th century. We thought this would be a natural and fun way to tell the story of chocolate," said Robyn Gallant, director of events for the Maritime Museum. Proceeds from the event will help fund the museum's education programs and maintenance of the vessels.

Chocolate figured prominently in early American history. As colonists rebelled against tea and everything British, they chose hot chocolate and coffee drinks as symbols of their freedom.

Dutch, English, French and Spanish physicians used chocolate as medicine in America until the mid-19th century. This bit of history didn't come as a surprise to chocolate fan Costas.

"Everyone knows that a few bites of chocolate always makes you feel better," she said.