

HAPPILY EVER AFTER:

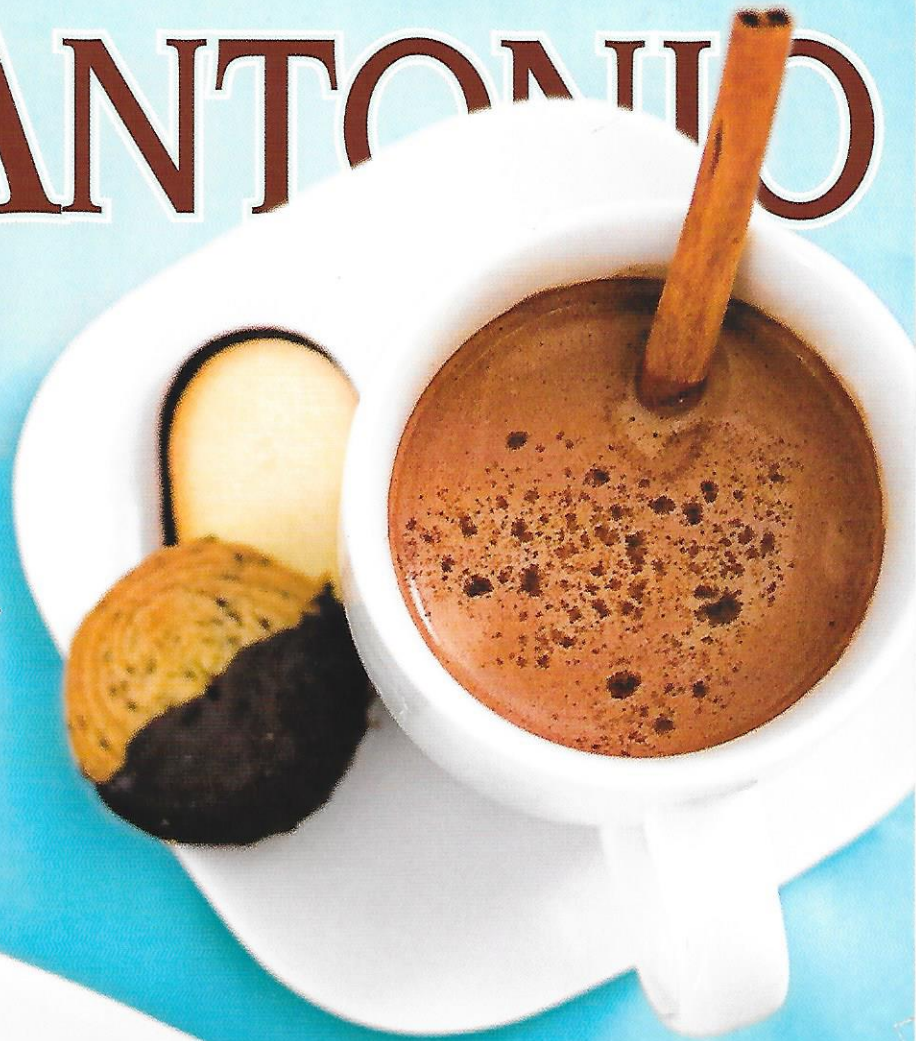
PATRICIA VONNE'S
MUSICAL MATCH

JESSE JAMES LEIJA
GETS ROMANTIC

MI TIERRA'S
FIRST CRUSH

SAN ANTONIO

For the
Love of
Chocolate
25 Sweet and
Sinful Treats



LA VIDA VAQUERO

'REAL COWBOYS' STILL
RIDE IN SOUTH TEXAS

WHEN OSCAR CAME HOME

SIX WINNERS
AND WOULD-BES

RIVER REMODEL

NEW TAKE ON
GERMAN TOUCHES

FEBRUARY 2009

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SUCCESS
STORY

Nº 9

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*This is a true story, but the names have been changed.

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Lyssa Myska Allen

One-time costume designer Lyssa Myska Allen tucked away her measuring tape to research tidbits on San Antonio's Oscar winners and nominees ("Hola Oscar," p. 22). Though Allen admittedly enjoys red-carpet fashion more than the award shows, she found her journey on the walk of fame an interesting trip. "I used to dream about being either an actress or the first woman president when I grew up, so learning about some feisty female Oscar winners made me proud," she says. "I love Olivia de Havilland's fighting spirit." Allen, a native Texan who believes that Texans have a peerless pluck, says of SA's actors, composers and screenwriters: "It's amazing to see how unique each of their stories is. It's like the only thing that ties them all together is how confident, sometimes bold and even a little brash each of the individuals is — obviously Texas' influence!" Allen's own unshakable Texas sass is infused in her writing. She's written about everything from fashion and fitness to design and dogs. When she's not on assignment, she runs with her rescue dog, Denali, plays flag football and basketball and co-chairs a powder puff football fundraiser for the Alzheimer's Association.



Kevin Sieff

Kevin Sieff's work in South Texas gave him a valuable perspective when writing about *El Vaquero Real*, *The Original American Cowboy*, a book and art exhibit by photographer John Dyer and artist Lionel Sosa ("La Vida Vaquero," p. 64). Sieff describes the project as a South Texas version of James Agee and Walker Evans' *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. "Here are two artists, who, like Agee and Evans, are working together to document a historical moment," Sieff says. "But there's also this interesting aesthetic relationship between painter and photographer, as the artists work within the bounds of their own media." Sieff was impressed by Sosa and Dyer's artful depiction of hard-working men — a challenge he knows well after spending a summer with a crew of commercial salmon fishermen in Alaska. Sieff photographed and wrote about the fishermen for the *Anchorage Daily News*. Like Sosa and Dyer, he also got his hands dirty, hauling in nets during the world's biggest salmon run. "There's something beautiful about the physicality of the work," he says. Sieff, a reporter based in Brownsville, writes about immigration and border security. His work has been published in the *Houston Chronicle*, *The Texas Observer* and the *Austin American Statesman*.



Michele Omenson

Michele Omenson accepted the laborious chore of writing about chocolate for our February offering of the sweet stuff ("A Chocoholic's Guide To Happiness," p. 48). We sent her on a quest to consume it, wear it and even bathe in it. She found 25 ways to indulge, waistline precariously in tact. Omenson's career in writing and editing spans more than 10 years. She was managing editor for Texas-based *Construction News* and features editor for *Parkland Life* in South Florida, covering topics such as education, health, arts and entertainment, travel, sustainable agriculture and one of her favorite passions, food. It was a fitting segue to overseeing our goto guide for dining and taking on the assignment about what could be the perfect edible. "I tried to step outside the box of chocolates, if you will, and seek out the unusual," she says. "Productivity in the office spiked with each sample I imposed upon my co-workers." The beauty in feature writing, Omenson says, is immersing yourself in a subject and sharing what you've learned with others. "And who doesn't like chocolate?" Omenson, who was assistant editor at *San Antonio Magazine* through December 2008, is now a full-time freelance writer. She has also contributed to *The Austin Idealist* and *New Times-Broward Palm Beach*.

KEVIN SIEFF PHOTO BY G. DANIEL LOPEZ.

Features



TOLL HOUSE COOKIES FROM JOSEPH'S RESTAURANT STOREHOUSE AND BAKERY

25 Chocolate Treats

Few things inspire passion-filled cravings like the promise of sweet, rich chocolate. In February, the month for all things sweet and passion-filled, we offer 25 of the city's most decadent desserts and drinks, plus a few innovative ways to enjoy our favorite flavor. From cakes, cookies and inventive Amy's Ice Creams flavors to spicy hot mixtures, artful truffles and edible Alamos, San Antonio's chocolatiers know how to hit the sweet spot.

58

Making Beautiful Music Together

SA-born Patricia Vonne found her two passions in a convenient (and handsome) package — husband and rocker Robert LaRoche. The musician and his muse share their love story.

60

A Family Affair

You might not know Pete and Cruz Cortez, but chances are you're glad the two met, fell in love and founded one of the city's most beloved restaurants. Next time you're enjoying enchiladas at Mi Tierra, thank Pete and Cruz.

62

Romantic Heavyweights

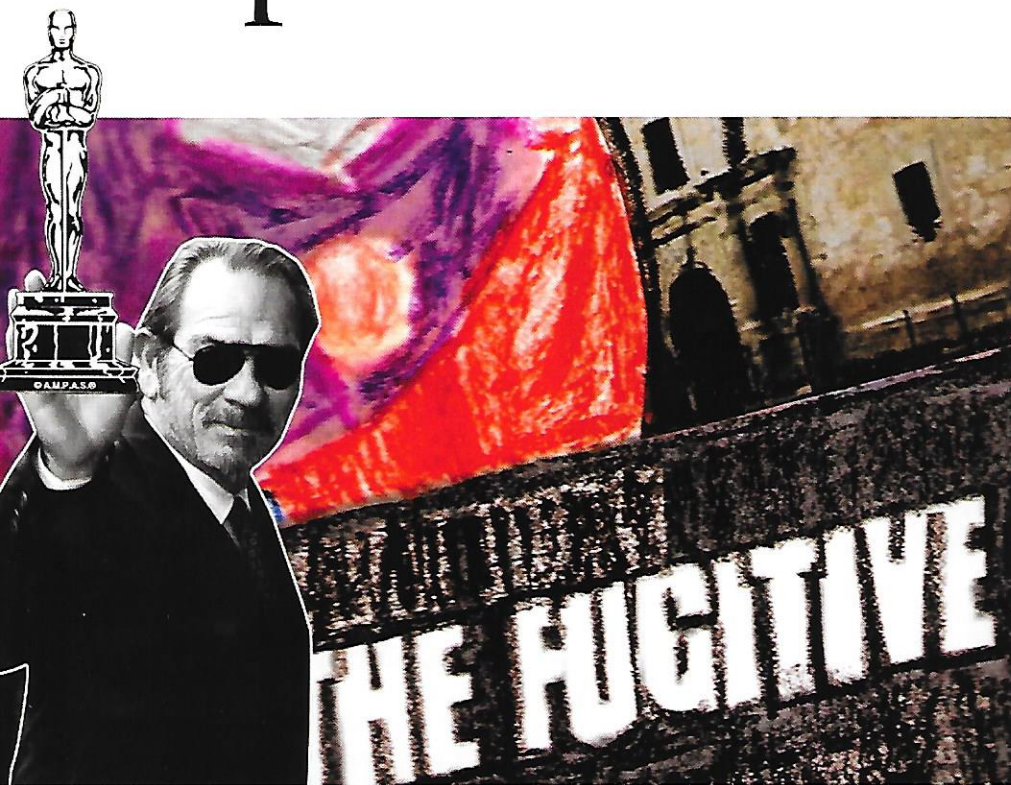
Boxing champ Jesse James Leija found his first love early, at his San Antonio middle school. The schoolboy crush grew into a lasting marriage with wife and business partner Lisa Leija.

64

The Cowboy Way

As rodeo fans head to the ring in February, we take a look at life outside the arena — where South Texas cowboys still blaze dusty trails. They are the vaqueros, the “real American cowboys,” as portrayed in a book and exhibit by photographer John Dyer and artist Lionel Sosa.

Departments



Datebook

81 | February Events

Come for the riders and stay for the rockers at the San Antonio Rodeo, be dazzled by magic man David Copperfield and have a retro experience with a stage performance of 1960s classic *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* this month.

Dining Guide

97 | Ciel

Fall in love with fine French dining in the hills of Stone Oak.

102 | Hip Sips

Mix up a Mon Cheri martini for the one you love.



In the Loop

22 | And the Winner Is...

San Antonio is (or was) home to a handful of Oscar nominees and winners, from Tommy Lee to Joan C.

26 | Six Picks

Before you head out for your next hot date, take a tip (or six) from a licensed matchmaker.

28 | Art & Literature

Author Eric Mapes explains the history behind San Antonio street signs, Black History Month on stage at the Carver and Goo Goo Dolls lead our Live Lineup in February.

32 | Out & About

People are talking about the National Philanthropy Awards Luncheon, the Grand Western Shindig and the Big Brothers Big Sisters Vintage and Fare.

In Health

34 | Heart-Healthy Eats

Yes, Mexican food has always tasted this good. No, it hasn't always been as fattening and greasy. Be easy on your heart and consider Tex-Mex's fresher options.

Style

38 | Girl, Go Red

If you wear just one color this February, make it red and make it worthwhile. National Wear Red Day is Feb. 6, and we put together a surefire look.

Home & Garden

71 | A River View

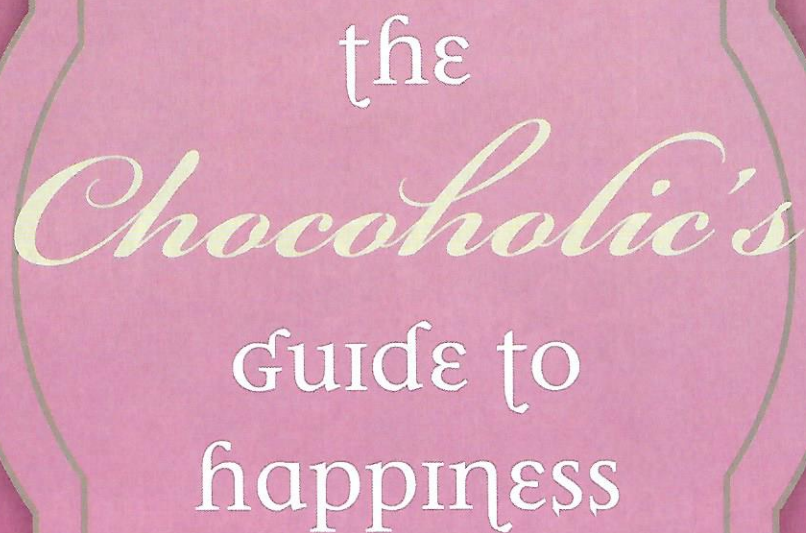
German architectural influences are evident in the Historic King William District. This house adds modern interpretation to the classic construction.

In Each Issue

16 | Reader Services

18 | Editor's Letter

20 | Contributors



the
Chocoholic's
Guide to
happiness

25 treats to eat, drink, wear and love

BY MICHELE OMENSON, PHOTOGRAPHY BY STACY SODOLAK

If one subscribes to the Forrest Gump philosophy of life and chocolate, the journey to the bottom of the box is half the fun. We found this to be the case while scouring our city for its most unique offerings. Leaving no truffle unturned, we discovered these picks in some unsuspecting guises — from beer and body paint to molé and indulgent spa treatments. It's no wonder the “food of the gods,” once revered as a symbol of virility, health and royalty, has claimed a food group in its own right, touting antioxidant and cholesterol-lowering properties. Plus, it tastes sublime. As a token of our affection this Valentine's Day, we offer a sampling for your finger-licking pleasure.

CHOCOL-ARTE
Hand-painted truffles by Grand Hyatt chef Daniel Keadle serve as decadent chocolate canvasses.



LA MERIENDA

Abuelita's spiced chocolate with milk, served with cookies for dipping at the Westin Riverwalk.



Westin Riverwalk

afternoon delight

Images of Montezuma sipping rich hot chocolate from a golden goblet come to mind during *la merienda*, the traditional late-afternoon snack served between lunch and dinner. Guests at the Westin Riverwalk can enjoy the age-old Spanish high tea, complete with cinnamon cookies and Abuelita's spiced chocolate, melted in milk for the true hot chocolate experience.

420 W. Market St., (210) 224-6500,
starwoodhotels.com

Windflower-The Hill

Country Spa

chocolate sugar

Chocolate and sugar create a calorie-free body dessert that leaves you feeling satisfied without expanding your circumference. A deliciously scented scrub sloughs away dead skin cells and worries, and being massaged with chocolate essential oils is just plain bliss. Don't want to indulge alone? The Chocolate Lover's Delight serves two with a truffle-infused body wrap for double the flavor and fun.

Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa,
9800 Hyatt Resort Drive, (210) 520-4022,
hillcountry.hyatt.com

Lush

chocolate kisses

Julia Roberts, Angelina Jolie and Halle Berry are among a slew of celebs who swear by Lush's body butters, bath bombs and bars. The ecologically conscious line of all-natural, hand-made cosmetics, sold deli-style, would be incomplete without the ultimate medicinal food. Pucker up like the stars with a Chocolate Whipstick Lip Balm, whispering hints of orange, and savor each smooch.

North Star Mall (inside Macy's), 7400 San Pedro, (210) 308-5874, lushusa.com

Silo Elevated Cuisine & Bar

ooze factor

Nothing disappoints more than delving with anticipation into a soufflé only to find a not-so-soft center. Silo's molten dark Belgian chocolate gooey cake steps up to the plate with perfectly poached lava oozing from a perfectly moist torte, resting atop a butter toffee sauce for a presentation that matches flavor.

1133 Austin Hwy., (210) 824-8686,
siloelevatedcuisine.com

The Lion and Rose British Restaurant & Pub

by the pint

Yes, really, chocolate beer. Admittedly, we were hesitant at first. But the British know their brew, and one sip of Young's Luxury Double Chocolate Stout, infused with all-natural dark chocolate, changed our ways. It's smooth and subtle and even better when mixed with Belgian raspberry ale, a friendly bar bloke tells us.

5148 Broadway, (210) 822-7673,
thelionandrose.com

Creative Chocolates

history in the making

Sculptor-turned-master-chocolatier Richard Berchin adds a new dimension to Alamo souvenirs with two sizes of the shrine's facade sculpted from a deliciously edible medium. Truly works of art, each reproduction is molded from the artist's original clay sculptures. They've even been featured by the San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau. Go ahead:

Take a bite out of the Alamo.

7700 Broadway, (210) 824-2462,

creativechocolates.com

Vroom Foods

va va vroom

Tired of dropping cash on energy drinks and designer coffee? California-based Vroom Foods offers an alternative to catching a buzz for a fraction of the cost and sans the spill factor. One Buzz Bite provides the equivalent caffeine of a cup of java, with enough B vitamins, ginseng and taurine to help you knock out that to-do list. Look for tins of chews in chocolate and chocolate mint varieties, available in vending machines nationwide.

vroomfoods.com

Central Market

chocolate chips

Here's a snack food with an identity crisis — chocolate tortilla chips that crunch like a chip and taste like a cookie. Made from stone ground white corn with semi-sweet chocolate, Dutch cocoa and turbinated sugar baked in with a subtle hint of sea salt, they're also gluten-free and kosher with zero trans fat or preservatives.

4821 Broadway, (210) 368-8600,
foodshouldtastegood.com

El Mirador

spice it up

The standard for some of the best caldos and sopas in town also serves up some of the most authentic molé sauce this side of the border. Legendary El Mirador matriarch Doña María Treviño still makes her version of the chocolate chile sauce from scratch, ladled generously over two homemade chicken enchiladas.

722 S. St. Mary's St., (210) 225-9444,
elmiradorrestaurant.com

Fine Spirits Emporium

a winner

Growing weary of imposter martinis, we found ourselves mourning the simplicity of the classic cocktail until discovering SXUL. Austin confectioner Rick Bristow blends his dark chocolate ganache with vodka for a libation that packs a punch. The Beverage Testing Institute awarded it the bronze in the 2008 International Review of Spirits.

5140 Broadway, (210) 822-9289,
sxulchocolate.com

Gourmet Burger Grill

hold the mayo

Mousse joins the selection of Kobe beef, lamb and turkey offerings at Gourmet Burger Grill. Chocolate mousse, that is. Patties of dark and milk chocolate mousse topped with a slice of white chocolate and fresh raspberry sauce on a slightly sweet brioche bun will still your heart.

18414 Hwy. 281 N., (210) 545-3800,
gourmetburgergrill.com

Tootie Pie Company

out of this world

They say you can judge a pie by its crust. The jury's in on Tootie's Heavenly Chocolate Pie. It passes the test, although two layers of chocolate filling (a thin flaky layer atop pure creaminess) make the outer shell seem secondary.

129 Industrial Drive, (210) 737-6600,
tootiepieco.com

The Melting Pot

take a dip

It's all about fondue, not sociological commentary, at The Melting Pot. The popular fine dining chain resurrected the Swiss tradition of communal dining around pots of delectable cheeses and chocolate for dipping. Be a purist or mix it up with the Flaming Turtle, milk chocolate, caramel and pecans, flambéed tableside.

14855 Blanco Road, (210) 479-6358,
meltingpot.com

MORNING TREAT

The Magnolia Pancake Haus adds chocolate chunks to its signature flapjacks.



Magnolia Pancake Haus
breakfast of champions

Who said you can't have chocolate for breakfast? Chocolate chip pancakes are arguably a dessert thinly disguised by a side of bacon. It's all the justification we need to toss propriety aside. The near-Frisbee-sized stack at Magnolia Pancake Haus begins with its famous homemade buttermilk batter and small boulders of pure Ghirardelli folded in ever so gently for an anytime-of-the-day fix.

606 Embassy Oaks, (210) 496-0828,
magnoliapancakehaus.com

Amy's Ice Creams
fire and ice (cream)

The favorite creamery in town scoops some 300 unique flavors that hardly speak plain vanilla. The fun part is not knowing what new palate teasers you'll find on any given day. On a chocolate mission, we set our sights beyond the traditional. The folks at Amy's Ice Creams delivered with chocolatey, spicy Up in Smoke, a blend of smoked peanut butter and smoked chipotle for "pizzazz at the end."

255 E. Basse Road, (210) 832-8886,
amysicecreams.com

Joseph's Storehouse Restaurant and Bakery
give thanks

While an array of fresh-baked desserts beckon at the popular sandwich and worship shop, the Texas-sized chocolate cupcake smothered in, yes, chocolate icing, challenges all restraint. It's a hundred-year-old recipe, says owner and manager Patrick McCurdy — and he's not talking. He will, however, tempt your penchant for sweets with melt-in-your-mouth toffee, chocolate fudge cake and the ultimate Toll House cookie.

3420 N. Saint Mary's St., (210) 737-3430,
josephs-storehouse.net

Ruth's Chris Steak House
repent, repent

We're not suggesting you pass up the famous Ruth's Chris filet, broiled in butter and served sizzling, only cautioning that there's a dessert on the menu that's worth saving a little room to indulge. A name like "chocolate sin cake" leaves little space for discipline. The flourless mound of pure chocolate and espresso, balanced with a tart raspberry sauce, is worth the splurge.

7720 Jones Maltsberger, (210) 821-5051,
ruthschris.com

Schokolad Chocolate Factory
paint job

No need to channel Picasso for this art project, only an interesting subject. In addition to edible picture frames and an assortment of everything chocolate imaginable, Schokolad Chocolate Factory offers body paint in a jar, complete with brush for that perfect stroke. Microwave for 30 seconds and get creative.

19141 Stone Oak Pkwy., (210) 490-5333,
schokolad.com

Coco Chocolate Lounge & Bistro

have dessert first

We found a dish that's both sin-sational and food-pyramid compliant. Coco Chocolate Lounge & Bistro's salade au chocolat begins with fresh greens and the harmony of cherries, toasted nuts, blue cheese and raspberry vinaigrette dressing. White chocolate, shaved on top to your sweet tooth's content, makes eating your fruits and vegetables a true act of love.

18402 Hwy. 281 N., (210) 491-4480,
sa-coco.com



HEAVENLY

Chocolate fudge cake
at Joseph's Storehouse
Restaurant and Bakery.

chocolate nuggets

A single chocolate chip can provide enough energy to walk 150 feet.

1907: Milk chocolate Hershey's Kisses are introduced. Today, Hershey makes about 20 million to 25 million per day.

An ounce of baking chocolate contains 10 percent of the recommended daily intake of iron.

The average American consumes 12 pounds of chocolate per year.

1960: Chocolate syrup is used to simulate blood in the famous shower scene in *Psycho*.

Valentine's week ranks No. 1 for chocolate candy sales each year, accounting for about \$414M in sweet sales.

ULTIMATE COOKIE
Joseph's Storehouse and Bakery takes Toll House to another level.



The Watermark Hotel and Spa
double scoop

Imagine 50 minutes devoted to pampering those tired tootsies. The Watermark Hotel & Spa features a chocolate ice cream pedicure that begins with a by-the-scoop fizzy foot soak, followed by a shower sherbet sugar scrub and masque of your favorite "topping" — chocolate, caramel or marshmallow. The ice cream sandwich punnise stone is yours to keep. 212 W. Crockett St., (210) 396-5840, watermarkhotel.com

Grand Hyatt San Antonio
palette for the palate

It takes pastry chef Daniel Keadle two hours to prepare a single box of 16 hand-painted truffles and the chocoholic about two seconds to devour. That is if you can bring yourself to eat them. Admiring the mini collectibles is part of the pleasure, but the explosion of banana caramel, pumpkin and other surprises to the taste buds is an art form all its own. 600 E. Market St., (210) 224-1234, grandsanantonio.hyatt.com

Piatti Ristorante & Bar

kuḡba-yun

It's a throwback to wholesome days around the campfire and a dessert that requires making a mess. Tortas, tiramisu and gelato are second picks to S'mores at Piatti, prepared table-side for two, four or six, uh... kiddos. That's right, no Eagle Scout certification or wood-gathering skills required. Your personal hibachi comes with all the accoutrements, including the prerequisite Hershey bars. 255 E. Basse Road, (210) 832-0300, piatti.com

Teavana

steepled in flavor

Who knew a wild shrub from Argentina could produce a miracle brew. Maté, the national drink of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, stimulates without jitteriness, suppresses the appetite and is packed with vitamins and minerals. The spice nut maté herbal tea at Teavana tea bar and emporium blends cocoa with coriander, pistachio, macadamia, red peppercorns and orange peel for a sip of heaven. North Star Mall, 7400 San Pedro Ave., (210) 340-5381, teavana.com

On Main Off Main

one hot tamale

They're not tamales, but a gangbuster packaging concept developed by Catherine Brown of Ashur Products in Pleasanton. These sweet reproductions, wrapped in actual cornhusks, are molded with French-born, California-based Guittard chocolate for unique gift giving that delivers in taste and presentation. Choose from milk, dark and white varieties, filled with almond ganache. 120 W. Mistletoe Ave., (800) 818-0923, chocolatetamales.com

Papa Dean's Popcorn

by pop-ular demand

It's not unusual to find the "Pop Gals" at H-E-B buying supplies for Papa Dean's "tried and true" chocolate popcorn. "It's so simple," co-owner Tara Staglik says. "It's just Hershey's Bakers Cocoa and lots of sugar." They've been mixing up the customer favorite in a 1958 20-gallon cooker for 26 years. The mix, one of dozens offered at Papa Dean's, is made for the salty-sweet palates. 6484 N. New Braunfels, (210) 822-3625, papadeans.com

Chocolate-coated events and info

Feb. 13


Central Market Cooking School—Cozy Dinner for Two or 10: Chef Molly Stevens, an award-winning instructor and author, offers a menu for a romantic Valentine's Day dinner that can be transformed into a feast. Stevens will present plenty of make-ahead tips for all courses, including a chocolate ginger tart for dessert. Central Market, 4821 Broadway, (210) 368-8600, centralmarket.com.

Feb. 14

Chocolate Day at the San Antonio Botanical Garden celebrates the story of chocolate with food demonstrations, music and a display of chocolate plants. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. 555 Funston Place, (207) 829-5100, sabot.org.

Coco Chocolate Lounge and Bistro serves up chocolate martinis for \$5 apiece during its daily Happy Hour, 4 to 7 p.m. 18402 U.S. 281 N. at Loop 1604, (210) 491-4480, sa-coco.com.

The Culinary Institute of America in San Antonio offers a recipe for chocolate mousse on its Web site, ciachef.edu. The step-by-step instructions are an excerpt from the CIA's *Cooking at Home with The Culinary Institute of America* cookbook.



GIMME S'MORE
These aren't the campfire
treats you remember.
S'mores at Piatti's raise
the snack to
sophistication.