

# HOW'S BUSINESS

with ED CLARK



## CHOCOLATE MYRACLES

**M**aster chocolatier! What a great job title. That's what Julia Balassa-Myracle always wanted to be, and she has her dream job. She's the owner of Chocolate Myracles, a gourmet-chocolate company in Spokane Valley.

Julia's appreciation for chocolate began at an early age while growing up in southern Mexico and Guatemala. She was fascinated with the fragrant aroma of cacao beans being roasted and processed into chocolate. Chocolate production in that region had changed little over several hundred years, and as a young girl, she carefully studied the time-tested process. This study was the catalyst for her enthusiasm for chocolate, which grew into a chocolate-covered kaleidoscope of ideas for the flavors and products that she now produces.

After graduating as a master chocolatier from a Canadian chocolate academy, Julia opened her Washington-state-certified, state-of-the-art chocolate-manufacturing facility in her Spokane Valley home. Each handcrafted gourmet truffle and chocolate she makes is produced in the old European tradition. All products are made with natural ingredients and flavors, with each bite an incredible time-stopping chocolate sensation for connoisseurs as well as average chocolate-lovers.


Chocolate Myracles uses only the purest

ingredients; no fillers, chemicals, artificial preservatives or artificial flavors are added. Julia handcrafts each chocolate to ensure the ultimate chocolate experience with rich and indulging flavors. The process starts with quality cacao beans, which are the foundation of gourmet chocolate. Quality beans are the result of proper fermentation, drying of the bean, roasting—the most important step in developing flavor and color—and grinding to a fine powder to separate the cacao butter and chocolate liqueur. The chocolate liqueur is ground with additional cacao butter, sugar, cream and natural vanilla to produce a thick, chunky substance that is ready for conching. Conching is the heating and blending that dries the liqueur mass to remove moisture and unwanted flavors; the process makes for a creamier, smoother, more flavorful chocolate. Then the chocolate liqueur is liquefied with cacao butter. A quality conching process often takes up to 72 hours and results in chocolate that is creamier, has a smoother texture and is more flavorful. Conched chocolate also has a high sheen and strong aroma.

After creating the perfect chocolate, Julia adds flavorings to produce truffles, bonbons and poured chocolates: amaretto, black raspberry, caramel pecan, cinnamon, coconut rum, Grand Marnier, maple, mint and nutmeg. One of her new creations is the San Christobal Bar, named after her

son, Christobal, and the town where she grew up, San Christobal de las Casas in Mexico. The 70-percent-cocoa-content bar is Chocolate Myracles' own unique blend made from the finest imported Venezuelan chocolate. The cocoa nibs are caramelized with chipotle and pasilla chilies.

Julia feels her craft is an endless learning experience, so she continues to build her knowledge and expertise through further study, attending workshops and seminars in Costa Rica, France and working with her mentor, the world-renowned master chocolatier Chef Paul in Las Vegas.

Chocolate Myracles are sold wholesale to upscale hotels like The Coeur d'Alene Resort, wineries including Latah Creek, boutiques like the Chocolate Apothecary in the Flour Mill and gift stores like Graceful Baskets, as well as retail to individuals and businesses. Chocolate Myracles also sells online at its Web site [www.chocolatemyracles.com](http://www.chocolatemyracles.com). 

*Ed Clark is the owner of The Clark Company, a Spokane-based advertising and public-relations agency serving a wide variety of retail, commercial, industrial, hospitality and entertainment clients throughout the Western U.S. He also produces the TV, radio and e-newsletter "How's Business Report." He can be reached at [ed@clarkadsp.com](mailto:ed@clarkadsp.com) or 509-838-4080.*