

# Making your own truffles is perfect sweet for your sweet

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**Julia Balassa-Myracle of Chocolate Myracles handcrafted these special truffles. On the left are dark chocolate truffles rolled in cocoa nibs, beside those are dark chocolate truffles rolled in cocoa powder. She uses Belgian Callebaut chocolate to make the truffles.**

### If you go

Julia Balassa-Myracle will teach classes on making hand-rolled truffles at The Kitchen Engine in Spokane on Feb. 23, and at Gourmet Way in Hayden, Idaho, on March 9.

The class at the Kitchen Engine starts at 6 p.m. and there will be some hands-on work with the chocolate. For more information or to register contact The Kitchen Engine at (509) 328-3335.

Reach Gourmet Way for class information or registration at (208) 762-1333.

### Make your own

#### Equipment

- Microwave-safe bowl
- Silicone mixing spoon or spatula
- Measuring cups (plastic or glass)
- Cutting board
- Large cutting knife for shaving the chocolate
- Stainless steel scoop (1 tablespoon)
- Parchment
- Baking sheet pan or cookie sheet
- Mixing bowl with a lid (for storing ganache)
- Storage containers for finished truffles

#### Or buy them

Many local candy makers offer hand-rolled truffles. Check with your favorite store.

Making a homemade treat for your sweetheart this Valentine's Day takes only a few basic ingredients and a bit of patience.

Hand-rolled truffles can be very simple or more inventive. Dark chocolate truffles dusted with cocoa powder will seem every bit as decadent as fig and almond truffles with mascarpone cheese, especially if you make the confections with your beloved's favorite flavors.

Splurge on the finest ingredients you can find and afford.

Julia Balassa-Myracle, of Chocolate Myracles in Spokane Valley, has been developing a basic truffle recipe for the chocolate classes she teaches at area kitchen and gourmet food stores.

Balassa-Myracle, who trained to be a master chocolatier at Ecole Chocolat in Vancouver, B.C. in 2006, is celebrating the fifth year of her business Chocolate Myracles. She plans to move operations from her home to a larger space in September that will include a small retail store near Argonne and Montgomery.

Her recipe calls for just three ingredients for the most basic truffles: chocolate, heavy cream and cocoa powder. For those who are more comfortable working with chocolates, there are endless ways to modify the recipe by infusing the cream with flavors, adding liqueurs or rolling the finished truffles in different toppings.

Those who want to take it a step further can master tempering chocolate and dip the truffles for a crunchy coating that complements the ganache (pronounced ganash) inside.

Truffles are named for their resemblance to the famous fungus that grows mostly in France and northern Italy.

"Like their namesake, chocolate truffles are round, and they are also associated with fine dining and luxury. Chocolate truffles are often finished with a dusting of cocoa powder resembling the earth clinging to a freshly dug truffle," according to "Chocolate and Confections from At Home with The Culinary Institute of

The chocolate makers featured in this story include:

- Chocolate Myracles sells handmade truffles and other chocolates at several area stores, including The Chocolate Apothecary, 621 W. Mallon Ave.; Latah Creek Winery and Gift Shop, 13030 E. Indiana Ave., Spokane Valley; Gourmet Way, 8222 N. Government Way, Hayden, Idaho; and The Spa at the Coeur d'Alene Resort.

- The French Quarter sells handmade truffles at 1311 W. Sprague Ave.

America" (Wiley, \$34.95).

The book is written by Peter Greweling, a professor of baking and pastry arts at the Culinary Institute of America, and includes detailed descriptions, step-by-step photos and recipes for both home cooks and professionals.

He is also author of the award-winning "Chocolates and Confections: Formula, Theory and Technique for the Artisan Confectioner."

For Balassa-Myracle's basic truffle recipe, she recommends Callebaut, which she purchases in bulk for

the business. She went through three-quarters of a ton of the Belgian chocolate during last year's "chocolate season" – generally October through Mother's Day, which is when the heat-sensitive candies can be safely shipped.

She sells Callebaut in 1-pound increments on her Web site, [www.chocolatemyracles.com](http://www.chocolatemyracles.com), for those who want to try their hand at truffle making. Other fine chocolate can be found in area stores for candy making; Scharffen Berger, Guittard, Lindt, Valrhona and Ghirardelli are among the easiest to find.

Balassa-Myracle uses a large knife – her "chocolate machete" – to shave the chocolate into fine pieces. She tries to find and chop any bigger chunks that are missed by the blade, but don't worry if they are missed; her recipe includes a microwaving step to melt any large chunks of chocolate.

Her heavy cream is specially ordered from Behm's Valley Creamery in Spokane Valley and has 40 percent butterfat. Heavy cream from the grocery store with 36 percent butterfat works just as well, or the higher-fat cream can be ordered.

Once the ganache is made, Balassa-Myracle uses a 1-tablespoon stainless steel scoop to make evenly sized truffles. She quickly forms the truffles using the index and middle fingers of one hand to roll the balls against her palm.

"Your hands can be too warm," she says.

There's no need to make the truffles perfectly round. Working with them too long can melt the ganache.

Balassa-Myracle dips the rolled ganache into cocoa powder, coconut, colored sugars, finely chopped nuts, cinnamon or nutmeg. Her signature truffles are rolled in cocoa nibs that she caramelizes with pasilla and chipotle chilies.

She recommends looking in the grocery store bulk bins for other inspiration for toppings – finely chopped sweetened dried fruits and candied citrus work well.

DeVerne Augustus began making truffles more than 15 years ago. He taught himself how to make them to give to clients as thank-you gifts when he worked in sales.

Now, Augustus makes an ever-changing assortment of hand-rolled and dipped truffles for his gourmet boutique The French Quarter. Greweling's book is an essential guide for anyone interested in learning, he says.

He says any recipe can be an inspiration for truffle flavors. "I've actually started making truffles that are designed to complement wines," he says.

Augustus makes confections that include local honey and buttermilk, ginger, cardamom and thyme with star anise.

"People come in and ask me which is my favorite (flavor) and I think, 'Well, who's your favorite kid?' " he says.

Infusing the truffles with liqueurs or other flavors is a nice way to personalize the truffles. In Balassa-Myracle's recipe, reduce the amount of cream by an equal amount for best results.

### **Basic Truffle Recipe**

*From Julia Balassa-Myracle, of Chocolate Myacles. She says, "This is a wonderful basic truffle recipe. You can create your own unique truffles by adding wine, nuts, dried fruits, spices, or other ingredients that you think may pair well with the chocolate."*

### **1 cup heavy cream**

*1 pound milk or dark chocolate*

For the ganache: Shave the chocolate as finely as possible with a stout knife blade. Place the chocolate in a mixing bowl and set aside.

Bring the cream to a boil and remove from heat. Allow to rest for several seconds. Pour the cream over the chocolate and mix well to incorporate all of the cream. This mixture is known as the ganache.

If the chopped chocolate is too large, small chunks of unmelted chocolate maybe present. Place the ganache in the microwave for 6 seconds. Mix well to melt the chunks. (Be careful when heating chocolate in the microwave; chocolate burns easily.) Repeat if necessary.

Allow the ganache to set up in the refrigerator for about 1 hour or until it's firm enough to work with.

To form the truffles: Remove the ganache from the refrigerator. Use a 1-tablespoon easy-release scoop to make the ganache balls. Scoop out a ball and lightly roll in the palm of your hand until it is in fairly uniform shape. Roll as quickly as possible to avoid melting the ganache balls. If they become too soft, they may need to be refrigerated 10 to 15 minutes until firm.

Roll the ganache balls in your favorite toppings. Coconut, colored sugars, cocoa powder, finely chopped nuts, cinnamon, nutmeg and other spices work well. The truffles are ready to enjoy immediately or can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

**Yield:** Varies.

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