



January 12, 2015 Meeting Recap: Chocolate @the Everest Chicago

Thank you to everyone who joined our most recent dinner meeting at Everest in downtown Chicago. Barry Callebaut sponsored the evening with over 100 lbs of chocolates for everyone to sample and R&D Manager Laura Kalaras helped walk us through the different tasting notes and differences between the chocolate and cocoa products. Some of the most interesting points included cocoa origin and processing, Alkalized or Dutched Cocoa, and composition of different chocolates.

Of the fifteen chocolates tasted many of them had unique flavors. The cocoa bean origin in many cases changes the flavor of the finished chocolates. An easily distinguishable difference in cocoa flavor would be between beans from Cameroon and beans from the Ivory Coast. In general beans found in Cameroon have a very smoky flavor associated with them while the beans from the Ivory Coast have much more pronounced chocolate and earthy flavors. Some other noticeable differences were found when sampling the chocolates from the Caribbean versus South America.

Outside of the origin country effecting the flavor of the cocoa, another well-known but less understood step of Alkalizing or Dutching cocoa powder makes a radical difference in the flavor of cocoa powder and chocolate. Dutching and Alkalizing are interchangeable terms. They both define that a salt has been added to the cocoa powder and is being used to raise the pH and modify the color and flavor. If you were to take 2 identical samples of the same cocoa and alkalize one of them what would you find? The differences between the 2 would be vast. The Natural Powder will retain many of the origin country flavors and have less of a chocolate flavor and more of a bitter acidic up front chocolate taste. The Alkalized Powder will have a very smooth long lasting chocolaty flavor that increases the further it is Alaklized.

After you have an understanding of the origin of the beans and whether or not you are Alklaizing the cocoa, the final step in the chocolate making process is determining what you want to make. White Chocolate is devoid of cocoa powder. It is typically a mixture of Cocoa Butter and Sugar. It is very soft and easily melts. Milk Chocolate is the next step which takes Cocoa Butter, Sugar, Cocoa Powder, and Dry Milk. This chocolate has the light brown color is sweet, milky, and smooth. Semi-sweet Chocolate is now becoming darker and more bitter. The composition of this product is typically Cocoa Powder, Cocoa Mass, and Sugar. The final step would be a Bitter Chocolate or Baking Chocolate which is the same as the Semi-sweet but without the Sugar.

We hope you had an informative meeting and tasted something that you enjoyed. Looking forward to seeing you next month!

Glenn Bluemer
CSIFT Chair-Elect