



DATE

5/1/2015

MEDIA PUBLICATION

Online Huffington Post.com

TITLE

Hnina - Healthy, Organic Chocolates That Are Delicious!

HUFF POST LOS ANGELES



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Publisher, Jay Weston's Restaurant Newsletter

HNINA - Healthy, Organic Chocolates That Are Delicious!

Posted: 05/01/2015 11:57 am EDT | Updated: 05/01/2015 11:59 am EDT



all photos

by Jay



Vanessa holding a box of their chocolates.

I'm nuts about chocolate. Especially dark chocolate, which doesn't contain any milk solids. Actually, I think I'm addicted to all chocolate, needing to imbibe a few pieces every day. But as a veteran food writer, I am also well-informed about the perils of sugar.....it's really poison in the body, yet almost impossible to avoid. What to do about my chocolate addiction? The answer came recently as I was writing a *Huffington* article about the small, elegant **Heritage Wine Bar** in Beverly Hills. As I was leaving one evening, the owner Jordane handed me a beautifully-wrapped chocolate truffle and told me to taste it. I got into my car and headed home down Wilshire and put the chocolate truffle into my mouth. I actually stopped my car and gasped in pleasurable disbelief. It was certainly one of the most unique chocolate experiences of my life. When I got home, I read the brochure that came with it from cover to cover. Then I went to the website of the people who made the chocolate.....www.hninagourmet.com. I learned that a Frenchwoman named Vanessa Morgenstern-Kenan and her husband, Ron Kenan, were making these chocolates here in L.A. under the name **HNINA**. The chocolates they are creating are made from a raw single-origin Grand Cru cocoa paste from a small farm in the Dominican Republic which took Vanessa four years to find. The sprouted nuts and seeds come from single sources also. The taste, texture, flavors and aromas of each chocolate truffle does not come from anything added to it but just from the quality of the ingredients, which are pure, traceable, raw, alive, full of life, enzymes and endless nutrients. These delights are simply made of organic raw cocoa, sprouted nuts & seeds, pure Bourbon vanilla, sweetened with raw honey & pure maples syrup and **THAT'S IT! NO REFINED SUGAR. NO DAIRY.** No emulsifier, GMO, palm oil, preservatives, waxes, chocolate of couverture.....nothing processed! Oh, my, here was something which I had to explore further.



some of the chocolates.

I went to their website and bought a Rocks Box....12 pieces of assorted chocolates for what seemed like an outrageous expense, \$50! But I was too intrigued to stop now. When the box arrived, it was heavy; the truffles alone weighed 12 oz. and was packaged with what I later learned was bio-degradable, recycled craft paper made with wind energy. Each truffle was cradled in the stunning box and atop the whole was a sheet explaining what each individual chocolate contained. I then did the unthinkable....taking a bite from several of them. I was hooked....on HNINA.



An open box with the description of each truffle.

I later learned that they find farms locally or around the U.S. that grow organic ingredients and work with them. "The work, passion and commitment of each farmer is what you taste in this chocolate," was a note which I later heard from Vanessa. Of course I then arranged a meeting with the couple behind the chocolates, Vanessa and Ron, and learned that their two delightful little girls went to a preschool just blocks from my house. They stopped by yesterday with the children for an interview. (Imagine, their two small girls, Julia and Carmel, speak English, Hebrew, French, Spanish and even some Hungarian! Incredible. And they have never had a piece of sugar laden candy of any kind. Ron told me that he had worked for twenty years as head of Haim Saban's music company but had retired a few years ago. Vanessa had been a successful international business executive until she got pregnant and became an international business consultant to finance her venture. Now they are both full-time entrepreneurs.



Vanessa with her twins, Julia and Carmel, who each speak five languages!

"In 2010 I was pregnant with twins and got a strong yearning for some chocolate, dark chocolate, but knew that in my condition I could not eat the stuff which was on the market. There was diabetes in my family and I could not risk it with ordinary chocolate. I searched everywhere and found that there was no really healthy good chocolate around. Then I became determined to explore the possibilities of what I could create...and that was the beginning of HNINA." She went on to relate the qualities of the amazing chocolates which they have created: Organic, vegan, dairy free, refined sugar free, gluten-free, paleo, sustainable, single origin ingredients never touched by harmful pesticides, no high-fructose or corn syrup ever! The raw honey is from Mexico, one of only a couple of places in the world capable of supplying raw and organic honey. The maple syrup is from Vermont and the pure Bourbon vanilla is from Madagascar. Everything is certified Organic. The truffles are Kosher Parve, non-radiated, unpasteurized, low glycemic, preservative-free. They are sprouted! Who does that?! This inspired concoction I thought to myself is the mother of all superfoods. I was ready to rush out a buy a few dozen boxes.



They come in assorted sizes.

Indeed, I reflected and realized that this was the healthiest, divine, nutritious, gourmet rewarding guilt-free raw vegan chocolate in the world. Ron laughed and said: *"We adhere to three principles: Purity, Traceability, Sustainability. We strive to maximize the health benefits, tastes, flavors, aromas and textures of an inherently superior product and, frankly, this can only be done by sparing no cost and tolerating no short cuts. Which is why our products are a little more costly than some other chocolates."* Vanessa went on to note that their truffles are loaded with antioxidants, nutrients, (flavanols, theobromine and epicatechin), proteins (around 5 grams per medium truffle), minerals (iron, copper and manganese) and group-B vitamins. Yes, I reasoned with myself, I would be doing myself a big favor eating these incredible chocolates. And so I popped another into my mouth.



a cross-section of the chocolates.

I asked about the authenticity of the raw chocolate paste, and Vanessa told me that the father of this small organic family farm in the Dominican Republic goes out every day to check on the fermentation of the beans and makes sure the temperature does not go above 115 degrees, where the cocoa would lose its raw nature.

"It is essential" Vanessa said "in the process of making the truffles to go back to traditions, and the happy result is maximum nutrition. Taking the time makes them delicious and so good for you. Slow food is the key to texture, taste and pure goodness. Technology and food processing does not lead to such result. These truffles are found at the intersection of gourmet and health."

They told me that their raw organic hazelnuts come from Oregon and the raw almonds from California. The raw pistachios come from Santa Barbara and the raw macadamia nuts from Hawaii. The Brazil nuts come from a small farm in Bolivia and the coconut they use comes from Sri Lanka. The cashews are from Brazil. The pecans and pine nuts are from Nevada. I asked specifically about the Seeds truffle and they said the raw flaxseeds are from Canada, pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds from North Dakota, and sesame seeds from Mexico. Vanessa explained how long it took to find each source and make sure that the nuts and seeds are raw, unpasteurized and un-radiated. Otherwise they would be a dead product and un-sproutable.

I learned that they offer seven different combinations of nuts & seeds truffles like Almond+Hazelnut, Macadamia+Pistachio, Brazil Nut+Almond+Coconut, Pistachio+Hazelnut, Walnut+Cashew, Pecan+Pine Nut, and finally Seeds. These come in four different sizes; small "Pebble", medium "Rock", large "Boulder", and giant bar "Brick" and are package in individual packages starting at \$2.95 all the way to the 12 Rock Assortment Box at \$49.95. On top of everything, they offer everything in three different preparation lines: Standard, where they slightly roast the nuts and seeds; Raw, where the nuts and seeds remain raw; and Vegan for the purists, where instead of honey & maple syrup, they only sweeten with maple syrup.

I asked where people can get these chocolates, aside from their website and the Beverly Hills French wine bar, Heritage, and they told me that Erewhon Market, Real Food Co, Urban Radish, Thrive Market and Monsieur Marcel at the Farmer's Market are carrying them. I predicted that one of these days very soon you will be able to buy them at Trader Joes and Whole Foods...and hopefully many other outlets.

These chocolate truffles have a unique taste and texture, with a flavorful sweetness unlike anything you have ever eaten. I can only suggest that you stop by one of those stores or order some online. You will be hooked by the uniqueness and applaud yourself for eating healthy chocolates. Amazing.