



The 4th annual West Coast Chocolate Festival, October 15-22, 2005
www.chocolatefestival.ca www.festivalduchocolat.ca

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For Immediate Release

The Business of Pleasure

Chocolates sales are making business owners smile, too.

The crescendo about overweight kids and teenage diabetes may have hurt confectionary and fast food companies, but chocolate has escaped being tarnished with the same brush.

Instead, chocolate companies are seeing record sales in response to many health studies showing health benefits from moderate chocolate intake, plus baby boomer preferences for fine and chocolates. This kind of demand has helped build a market for the 4th annual West Coast Chocolate Festival, October 15-22 in Coquitlam, Port Moody and Port Coquitlam.

"There's no doubt sales have been increasing," says Jay Scheere, president of Chocolate Works, a Coquitlam company that imports, distributes and manufactures chocolate. He estimates sales growth of 15 to 20 per cent in each of the last three years. "You see a lot of new chocolate shops opening in the lower mainland."

In BC, there are about 35 chocolate manufacturers employing close to 2,000 people, producing estimated sales of close to \$100 million, according to BC Stats. These figures do not include small chocolate shops that make their own chocolate, and do not include sales of chocolate not made in BC.

More than 20 of these chocolate companies will showcase their treats at consumer tradeshow All Things Chocolate at the Executive Plaza Hotel in Coquitlam, October 16. "All Things Chocolate has the whole variety of BC's chocolate companies," says West Coast Chocolate Festival president Paula Fowler. "People can taste chocolate from familiar hedgehogs to high-end chocolate artworks, as well as diabetic chocolate."

"Greater Vancouver is world renowned to foodies." says Barb Stegemann, Tourism Director for the City of Coquitlam. "Culinary tourism is one of the hottest trends these days and the West Coast Chocolate Festival is the perfect attraction for people seeking to experience west coast cuisine. Add in some wine pairings from our BC vineyards and finish it off with some divine chocolate confection with a few workshops and you've got a festival that is attracting thousands of people because it satisfies a craving we all share."

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