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How Sweet It Is!

To borrow a line from Forrest Gump, “Life is like a box of chocolates.” This line not only ties in this month’s Item of Value (yum!), but also summarizes our current move - in a word, “Sweet!”

In the unlikely event that you missed our big news, Janie and I recently left Coldwell Banker and joined Alain Pinel Realtors (APR) in Palo Alto. While the decision to make the move was the source of much angst over the last 12 months, now that we are here we couldn’t be happier. Not only was APR the top real estate brokerage in Palo Alto in 2012, but we have been extremely impressed with our new manager, Bob Gerlach, our new co-workers, and the level of professionalism and mutual respect that is part of the office culture. Thus far, life at APR has been invigorating!

Our new contact information is (cell numbers unchanged):

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Switching gears over to real estate, “sizzling” and in places, “ridiculous” are accurate descriptors. The bottom line is we need new listings. The number of homes currently for sale is coming nowhere close to meeting the demand. Now that the Super Bowl is over, the hope is that more listings will be coming on the market. There are some signs of this happening, but for a healthy, balanced market we need more listings. Sellers currently hold all the power.

Just how challenging is it for buyers? Here is a sampling of the *extremes* from the last couple of weeks:

- 2334 Clipper Street, San Mateo – 90+ offers
- 882 Pecan Court, Sunnyvale – 62 offers
- 40 Tum Suden Way, Redwood City – 26 offers
- 184 Sunkist Lane, Los Altos – 17 offers

While Palo Alto regularly sees offer counts in the teens, there is clearly a need for more listings everywhere. Speaking of, if you know someone interested in a super charming 2/2 in the historic Old Quad section of Santa Clara, we are about 1 week away from bringing on a 1910 bungalow. This is truly a home rich with character!

Best Regards,

Janie and John Barman
Exceptional Knowledge, Superior Service

“Oh, by the way, we are never too busy for your referrals.”

Falling In Love With Chocolate



Do you consider yourself a chocoholic or an occasional indulger? Chances are you enjoy the richness of chocolate, whether it's in bar form, as part of a baked good or as a liquid to warm you up on a chilly day. Although chocolate had a humble beginning, it's become one of the world's favorite sweet treats.

A brief history of chocolate

"Chocolate" comes from the Aztec word **"Xocolatl,"** meaning "bitter water."¹

People originally drank chocolate. The beans were ground into a fine powder, added to cold water and stirred. Cocoa was also added to porridge.

Theobroma cacao, the tree that grows pods and beans that are made into chocolate, was domesticated in South America near the Amazon Basin 4000 years ago.²



Become a chocolate bar connoisseur: The best tasting chocolate bar should be shiny, even and snap off cleanly when you bend off a corner of it. It should also taste creamy and rich as it melts in your mouth.²



Chocolate becomes a luxury

Chocolate houses became the "it" place for London's elite to relax and converse in 1657.

Chocolate was a beverage until J.S. Fry & Sons, a British company, made solid chocolate by adding more cocoa butter to the cocoa powder and sugar recipe.²

Chocolate money?



Although there's evidence that the Olmec in southeast Mexico used cacao as early as 600 BC, it was the Mayans in the 6th century who built

a culture around chocolate, drinking it and using the cacao beans as currency. The pods symbolized life and fertility.³

Aztec warriors drank chocolate to boost aggression and virility. They added chili peppers and corn meal to their chocolate beverages to add flavor.³

When Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés conquered the Aztecs, he continued to use cacao as currency and started his own plantation to grow this "money." He introduced the beans to Spain's king, Charles V, who mixed the bitter chocolate drink with sugar from Caribbean sugar plantations and added vanilla, cinnamon and other spices.³



Modern chocolate

Daniel Peter and Henri Nestlé added condensed milk to solid chocolate in 1875 to create milk chocolate.²

Richard Cadbury is responsible for the heart-shaped box of chocolates that has become ubiquitous with Valentine's Day. His father, John, began to mass produce them in 1868.²

Although the first chocolate factory opened in New England in the mid-1700s, chocolate was a luxury of the rich until Hershey's developed its chocolate bar in the early 1900s.



Sources: 1. Lindt
2. Yahoo News
3. Telegraph UK

Chocolate and your health



Chocolate was once a cure-all. Doctors used it to treat fevers, aid digestion and relieve pain.¹

17th century physician Henry Stubbe recommended drinking chocolate twice a day to cure the fatigue associated with hard work. He claimed that chocolate benefited the heart and increased milk production in nursing mothers.¹

Chocolate contains powerful antioxidants shown to lower your LDL, or “bad,” cholesterol.¹

It also contains flavonoids that offer antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and cell-protective benefits. But stick to dark chocolate, which contains more flavonoids and may also help to lower blood pressure.²

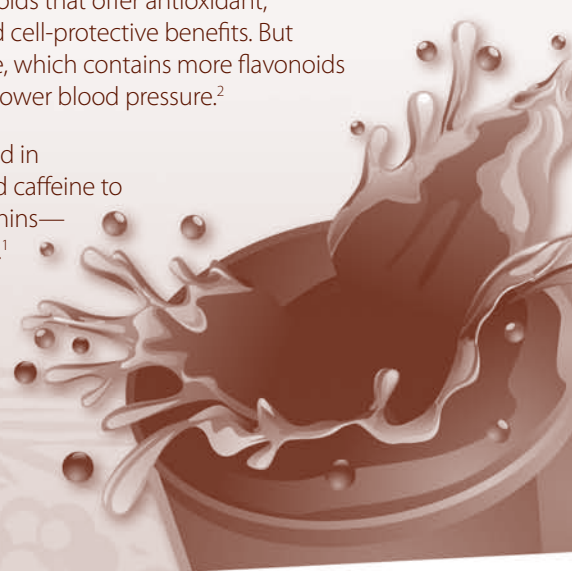
Phenylethylamine, a chemical found in chocolate, works with sugar, fat and caffeine to help release serotonin and endorphins—or “love chemicals”—into the body.¹

Chocolate milk is as effective a post-workout recovery drink as sports drinks and protein shakes, and it helps athletes to relieve muscle soreness.²

Men who eat chocolate live one year longer than those who don't.³

To reap the most benefits from chocolate, eat no more than 3 ounces of dark chocolate with a cocoa content of **65%** or higher per day. Any more and you'll just gain weight.⁴

Sources: 1. Yahoo News
2. Women's Health
3. California Academy of Sciences, Chocolate: The Exhibition
4. Mayo Clinic



Can you imagine a future without chocolate?



There aren't enough current cocoa plants to keep up with production demand. The plants need tropical, humid conditions and rich soil to thrive.¹

Demand for chocolate increases by **2.5** to **3%** per year, translating to 4 million more tons of cocoa needed to meet demand each year.¹

Demand for chocolate will increase by **25%** by 2020 as more people in the developing world are able to afford it.¹

As demand increases, the cacao supply will shrink, which means there will be less chocolate for us to enjoy.