

## Rehoboth festival caters to chocolate lovers

By Maria Counts  
Staff Reporter

Trying to get your chocolate fix this weekend? Well, area chocolate lovers are in luck! On Saturday, March 6, the 20th annual Rehoboth Beach Chocolate Festival will be held at the Rehoboth Beach Convention Center. The festival will benefit Rehoboth Beach Main Street and the Friends of the Rehoboth Beach Library, two area non-profit groups.

"Rehoboth Beach Main Street is formed in cooperation with the National Trust For Historic Preservation, and we work to encourage a strong commercial core in downtown Rehoboth Beach. We promote tourism and facilitate long-term economic development and business retention," explained executive administrator Jenny Barger.

The main event of the festival, which brings thousands to the area year after year, is the baking contest. This year's theme is "A Day For Chocolate Lovers." On the morning of the festival, the public may enter their baked goods in the contest between 7 and 8:30 a.m. at Convention Hall. Late entries will not be judged but are welcome to be used in the sampling part of the festival.

Categories in the contest are Restaurant, Bakery, Professional/Chef, Amateur, Kids 12 & Under and Showpiece. Recipes do not need to be original or from scratch, but submitted entries should include the entire yield of the recipe and must include some kind of chocolate.

"They can enter anything from cookie, brownie, pie, cheesecake, candy or anything else that might be chocolate," Barger explained. "Then we go on a break and we let the judges determine the winners."

Judging will begin at 9:14 a.m. and is based on texture, flavor and presentation. Once the judges are done, the baked goods will be offered for tasting.

"They're cut into sample-size pieces, and they are placed on tables on the outskirts of the convention center hall, according to category. So there are just thousands and thousands of pieces of chocolate going around the boarder of convention center," Barger described.

Public tasting will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., or "until the chocolate runs out." Tickets for the tasting will be sold at the door, with admission set at \$2 per person, though children younger than 5 are admitted free of charge. Once inside, people are able to sample as many tasty treats as they'd like, one per sample ticket – at a cost of 50 cents each.

In the center of the convention center, nine vendors – Blue Restaurant, Dove Chocolate, Hobo's Restaurant, Lupo Di Mare, Maui Wowi Hawaiian Coffee & Smoothies, Nourish, Sugar Rush Fudge, Touch of Italy and the Village Improvement Association – will be set up for the public to walk around, some with tasty offerings of their own. And, set up by the convention center's stage, there will be ice cream flavors to sample.

Kids games will be provided by Rehoboth Co-Op Preschool. Kids can have a fun time partaking in a marshmallow toss or treasure find, and doing crafts such as chocolate pudding finger-painting and making bookmarks.

If your tummy needs a break from all the chocolate, you won't need to step outside of the convention center to get some lunch.

"Rehoboth Beach Main Street will have a hot dog stand at the festival for anyone who wants a quick lunch in between trying all the chocolate samples," Barger said.

The baking contest's grand prize-winning entries will be displayed in the convention center and other prizes will be announced, as well.

"The bakery and restaurant that wins grand prize will get a plaque, a ribbon and bragging rights. And then the rest of the categories will receive ribbons and downtown gift certificates," Barger noted.

"It's a great event for the community and chocolate lovers alike to come together and enjoy. It's really such a nice community event," continued Barger. "Everybody from kids, adults, local, non-local, come together and enjoy chocolate."

For more information, call (302) 227-2772. The Rehoboth Beach Convention Center is located at 229 Rehoboth Avenue in Rehoboth Beach, Del.

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