

# Family Matters

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## Chocoholics will love lessons at Cocoa Black

By Gordon Blackstock

**ARE you a last-minute Lothario who's used to hunting for the last box of chocs on February 13?**

Then it might be time to make it up to your Valentine by making your own — and with that in mind, you might head back to school.

Welcome to Cocoa Black, Scotland's only chocolate school.

Nestled in the picturesque borders town of Peebles, the company, run by husband and wife Ruth and David, has been offering chocoholics a lesson they'll never forget — how to make their own — for two years.

### Prestigious

"It's definitely the type of school people don't mind going to!" laughs mum-of-two Ruth (38), a winner of two prizes at the prestigious 2010 World Chocolate Masters.

"Our pupils all have differing ability but we cover everything from beginners to advance levels."

Ruth has plenty of experience in the field having worked as a pastry chef her whole working life.

"I trained as a chef but didn't like going home smelling of fish and meat.

"But who doesn't like the smell of chocolate?"

For Valentine's Day, Cocoa Black is offering "his and her" chocolate making courses as the ultimate indulgent couples time.

Most courses last two to three hours and prices begin at £29.



Chocopupils will learn the basics of gourmet chocolate making from Ruth, who instructs and supervises all chocolate production.

She said, "Couples find it particularly fun to experiment with personalising chocolates — like beautiful transfers as well as edible glitter.

"It's more special than simply buying a mass-produced box from a retailer."

Pupils also receive instruction in the very latest techniques as you learn to work with Ruth's personally selected couverture — a high quality type of chocolate with a higher percentage of cocoa butter than that sold in shops.

Plus, pupils get to take home the fruits — or sweets — of their labour.

Ruth says, "Like everything costs drive what manufacturers put in products.

"Sugar is very cheap and



cocoa butter is expensive. So most big companies use more sugar than cocoa butter. We like to do the opposite.

"Couverture from different countries or different types of cocoa plant can vary dramatically in flavour, in much the same way as wines differ based upon the grape or region.

"I think it's really important to experiment with different couvertures.

■ Ruth demonstrating to a class at the Cocoa Black chocolate school. Making your own chocs is more special than buying a mass-produced box from a retailer.

land from Australia, where they met.

Ruth, originally from South Africa, quickly fell in love with her adopted country.

And when David, was made redundant from his banking job two years ago, the couple decided to open up Cocoa Black.

Business is so brisk with sales of hand-made chocolate and enrolment in the school, the couple are planning on relocating soon, complete with their three chefs and 16 staff.

"I never thought I'd be running a chocolate school in Scotland," says Ruth.

"My dad is a dentist and we were never allowed chocolate in the house when I was growing up!"

To arrange a course with Cocoa Black visit [www.cocoablack.co.uk](http://www.cocoablack.co.uk) or tel. 01721 723764.

## Rose needs gloves to pick up milk

By Bill Gibb

THERE'S one thing Rose Bevan, from Tayport, always has to do before getting a pint of milk from the fridge — put on a pair of gloves.

Rose is one of the hundreds of thousands of Scots suffering from Raynaud's, a condition that temporarily stops the blood supply reaching the body's extremities.

It's triggered by exposure to the cold or any slight change in temperature — Rose knows even a quick dive into the freezer can be enough to trigger a painful attack.

Those affected commonly suffer

from excruciating pain in their fingers and toes.

"I get it in my hands, feet, nose and ears," says Rose. "It's a burning cold and you're never sure how long it's going to last."

Rose always wears several layers of clothes and even layers of gloves.

She reckons winters — especially the one we're living through, the bitterest for decades — are only bearable thanks to a treatment at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee.

It involves an infusion of a man-made version of the natural hor-

mone prostacyclin that opens up the blood vessels and prevents the blood flow becoming sluggish.

Rose reckons her annual session is invaluable.

"It's something that only tends to be used in more severe cases," explains Anne Mawdsley, founder of the Raynaud's & Scleroderma Association (RSA).

Rose is raising funds for the RSA at the Wellgate shopping centre in Dundee on Friday and Saturday.

And those affected can get help at [www.raynauds.org.uk](http://www.raynauds.org.uk) or by calling 0800 917 2494.



■ Rose always wears gloves.

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