



NORMAN LOVE CONFECTIONS: THE *art* OF LOVE

BY LAURA J. CUMMINGS GATES

Valentine's Day is a crazy holiday for Norman Love Confections. It's the annual ritual of the last-minute male, on his quest to procure the perfect token of his passionate affection – all on his way home from work.

Luckily, Norman Love has him covered. No man bearing handcrafted “jewels” of artisan chocolate could be spurned. This Valentine's Day, it's even more convenient, as Love has opened his fourth Southwest Florida location at Miramar Outlets, offering chocolates, pastries and gelato. Ten new eye-catching, heart-shaped chocolates have been designed, each tiger-striped in bold colors to express the “Wild Side of Love.”

While Norman Love chocolates are certainly famous in Southwest Florida – adorning tables at hundreds of local charity events annually – the chocolatier has also received numerous national accolades from the likes of “The Today Show,” “Robb Report,” InStyle magazine, Martha Stewart

Living and O, The Oprah Magazine. Consumer Reports has recognized the company 13 years straight for best ultra-premium chocolates, and National Geographic named Love among the “10 Best Chocolatiers in the World.”

“There are days I go home and I am in awe that what we do is so popular and appreciated,” Love says.

In the last three months alone, USA Today named Love a finalist for its 2014 Entrepreneur of the Year, Huffington Post ranked Norman Love Confections among its top destinations for the “Chocolate Lover's Travel Guide,” and Forbes.com named Love's “BLACK” line among its Top 10 after sampling more than 100 truffles.

Now, Love's artisan chocolates are going global aboard Princess Cruises, which fittingly was the cruise line used for filming “The Love Boat.” The onboard “Chocolate Journeys” experience entices guests with custom-crafted desserts, chocolate-and-wine pairings and breathtaking chocolate bites.



Norman Love (left) recently released his new "Wild Side of Love" collection (below), featuring 10 eye-catching, heart-shaped, tiger-striped chocolates.



Love also has recently released a book, "Artistry in Chocolate, A Story of Love" – with 84 pages of stunning photos of his confectionary treats. We caught up with Love at the Miromar location during the bustle of the holiday season and asked him the secret to his success.

"It's about ensuring quality," Love says. "We've grown really methodically and consistently because the integrity of the product is the most important thing we do. As we were able to make more chocolates and better chocolates, I allowed the company to grow."

Norman Love Confections now produces about 7 million chocolates a year out of its Fort Myers headquarters near JetBlue Park, the spring training home of the Red Sox.

Fittingly, Love uses a baseball analogy when speaking of success. "I go everyday to knock it out of the park," he says. "Success is every day. The future is actually called reward."

While Love has grown the business slowly, his reputation

as a master chocolatier has sprouted up quickly ever since opening the business in 2001 with the "G" line for Godiva. He attributes his ongoing success to good fortune, good karma and hard work.

Also added to the list of ingredients for Love's success is his innovative eye for artistic design. He strives to create a "wow" factor when opening a box of his dazzling chocolates. He uses only top quality ingredients, sourced from around the world and decorated with distinction.

"Chocolates were kind of boring before I started putting color on them," he admits.

Love describes himself as a "windup toy," with a mind that never stops running.

"I don't know how to spell complacency," Love says. "Complacent businesses get passed by your competitor. Our industry is about continually learning. I always want to be better than I was yesterday." ■

