

Olympic Athlete Wears Chocolate Dress as Chocolate Salon Opens

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The fourth international Salon du Chocolat is now open in Moscow after a flamboyant, chocolate-laced ceremony at Expocenter including a special guest appearing in a chocolate dress.

The salon, which runs till Sunday, returns after seven years away. One major difference is an emphasis on Russian chocolate this year. One of the exhibits on show is a pre-revolutionary Kinder Surprise, a chocolate egg made in Russia in 1909 which has ceramic figures inside.

The climax of the evening's festivities Wednesday was undoubtedly the catwalk show of chococentric attire. Before a dress made entirely out of chocolate appeared, tiaras, handbags and necklaces all crafted from the sweet substance were shown off on the catwalk.

Opera singer Maria Maksakova sang in a chocolate-colored dress and Olympic speed skating champion Svetlana Zhurova walked the catwalk in an elegant white dress called "Dress of the

"Light of the Moon" created by French and Russian designers and beladen with chocolate decorations.

Vitaly Ponomaryov, who once sculpted Putin's face out of white chocolate for Konfael, a company that specialises in presents made out of chocolate, was engrossed in making a giant chess-piece out of a block of chocolate.

"Chocolate has a mesmerising effect and it is amazing for so many confectioners to meet in such an interesting forum, to exchange experiences and exchange ideas," he said. "In a time when Russia is experiencing a small crisis it is easy to see why people have returned to chocolate, because chocolate is a hormone of happiness, why not eat as much as you can, it is simply delicious."

Ponomaryov was not the only confectioner artist displaying his creativity talents and a number of confectionary stalls at the Salon du Chocolat were keen to emphasise that chocolate was both a delicacy and an art.

French company Bron-Coucke has created a pen which can draw intricate patterns with multi-colored melted chocolate.

The various stalls however, are not the only attraction. Over the weekend, there is a huge variation of events. Visitors can attend lectures on the history of Russian chocolate or master classes by Russian and French masters on the best ways to make a series of chocolate dishes. One master class is called "anticrisis chocolate."

Other activities include workshops on the manufacture of children's chocolate products, an exhibition of chocolate sculptures and culinary painting master classes.

Apart from Russian chocolate there is also chocolate from France, Belgium, Colombia, Hungary and other countries.

Salon du Chocolat was created in France and the show has taken place in Paris, London, Tokyo, Shanghai and Rio de Janeiro catering to over 6.4 million visitors in the last 20 years.

Tickets cost 400 rubles, 250 rubles for children and it will take place at the Expocentre until March 8.

Salon du Chocolat runs until Sunday. 10 a.m. To 7 p.m. Expocentre. 14 Krasnopresnenskaya naberezhnaya. Metro Vystavochnaya. www.salon-du-chocolat.ru

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