

**HOLD THE DATE!**

Spring is coming and so is the  
R.U.1.2? Queer Community Dinner  
**SATURDAY, APRIL 10**  
Wyndham Hotel, Burlington  
(FORMERLY THE RADISSON)



**ON THE MOVE** *The 6th Annual Queer Community Dinner & Auction*

Keynote Address by **MATT FOREMAN**  
*Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force*

Entertainment by **JENNI JOHNSON**

*"Jenni Johnson is on a mission to bring back the black female blues and jazz singers from the 1920s through the 1940s. Actually, Ma Rainey, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, Nina Simone, Etta James and Roberta Flack have never ceased influencing contemporary music, but the hard-working Burlington chanteuse revives them by performing their songs as they might have sounded decades ago."*

— SEVEN DAYS



Plus the Best **SILENT AUCTION** in Vermont, Spinning by **PERIWINKEL**, the Volunteer of the Year Award and more!

Tickets will go on sale March 1st. For more information contact R.U.1.2? Community Center at 802.860.7812 or thecenter@ru12.org

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# CHOCOLATE for Health?

BY EUAN BEAR

The eight-page fax rang a few scam-alert warning bells for me, but with a headline like "Health by Chocolate," how could any chocoholic resist at least giving it a read? So far as I know, no calories or fats can be acquired in just reading.

"Eating Chocolate Now Gives You Beautiful Skin!" Or so shouted the headline in all caps. And even though I have never worn make up (other than on stage in high school drama productions), I had heard of Ecco Bella, a maker and distributor of "cruelty-free" cosmetics. They were the ones behind chocolate's rehabilitation in the "beauty" world. I was so skeptical that I went to the web site and emailed Ecco Bella: "Is this a scam or legitimate? I notice no info on this product on the Ecco Bella site."

I got an immediate reply, that yes, it was legitimate, but they weren't quite ready then to get the web pages up and running (and by the time you read this, the web pages are there). And then they sent samples.

Health by Chocolate Instant Bliss Beauty Bar is the product, consisting of "Swiss chocolate with antioxidants for beautiful skin." The antioxidants are blueberries, which, the company insists, we'll never taste. The label also lists "cocoa butter with 0 cholesterol" along with cranberry seed oil, lutein, and lycopene, among other ingredients. The bar is organic and contains 55 percent cocoa solids.

And the accompanying literature declares that cocoa butter is good for the skin – when eaten, not just when applied topically.

On to the taste test! It's a tough job, but I consider it just one of the many sacrifices I make for the community I serve, especially this close to a major chocolate-giving, -getting and -consuming holiday like

Valentine's Day.

The chocolate is organic dark. This is definitely not Hershey's, not even Hershey's "Special Dark." It's not Cadbury's or Lindt. It's different from Lake Champlain and Gay Bar options. And it's nearly as intense as Green & Black's 70 percent cocoa-solid organic dark.

It has a rounder, more complex, dare I say "fruitier" taste, and a very good smooth, firm – but not brittle or harsh – mouthfeel, with a lingering hint of pleasant aftertaste, but without the gummy sweet coating effect of cheap chocolate. Think of what the addition of coffee does to good chocolate – it adds aroma and flavors that linger and round out the complexity of the already rich chocolate. That's apparently what the blueberries and other additives do here.

It's definitely good, and certain health claims have begun to surface about the antioxidant power of chocolate. Check out the FAQs at [www.healthbychocolate.com](http://www.healthbychocolate.com). Among the assertions are some amusing ones: "What happens if I go on a Health By Chocolate binge and eat more than one bar? You'll be in a very good mood ..." "Will eating Health by Chocolate make me fat? Chocolate doesn't make you fat ..." And my favorite: "I love eating health by chocolate. Could I be a chocoholic? We hope so! If you love the smooth, luxurious, melt-in-your mouth feel and the well-rounded

sweet taste of fine dark chocolate, than you are not wrong to crave it! 44% of American women and 17% of men crave chocolate. ..."

The FAQs even declare that chocolate has twice the "oxygen radical absorbance capacity" as prunes, the "same amount of flavonoids as red wine" and "four times the polyphenols" as contained in green tea. These claims are being made for chocolate in general, dark chocolate in particular, and by association for Health by Chocolate Instant Bliss Beauty Bars.

Well, despite the claims, the web site, the eco-pedigree (fair-trade certified and "95 percent organic"), and the nicely complex flavor, I'm not likely to spend the \$3.49 suggested retail for a 50-gram (1.75 ounce) bar. London-based Green & Black's organic dark (and "Maya Gold," with cinnamon and a hint of orange) is available at several local outlets for about half that cost – and check out their web site: [greenandblacks.com](http://greenandblacks.com).

Perhaps the best thing Ecco Bella has done is alert the chocolate-craving public of something we never knew before: we have always been on the cutting edge of healthy eating. As Health By Chocolate puts it, "Dreams do come true." ▼

