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Fashion

Chocolate makes a fashion statement

Monday, November 3, 2008

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BY ROBERT BIESELIN
STAFF WRITER

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Were anyone but Vanessa Greeley to walk into a suburban kitchen, a broad smile across his or her face, clutching a brassiere half-covered in chocolate, it would be reasonable to think that person abnormal, kinky or just plain mad. Yet when the Glen Rock pastry chef did the same, it was somehow more appropriate to think of her as being prepared.



TYSON TRISH/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Dina Sadik, left, and Vanessa Greeley work on a chocolate headpiece.

For Greeley and friend Dina Sadik, a chocolatier, all preconceptions and taboos were considered hindrances and all wild ideas were deemed viable as the boisterous pair prepared an outfit — of satin, spandex and 40 percent chocolate — to be worn by a model in the fashion show at this week's Chocolate Show. Yes, when the time came, they threw

caution to the wind and threw undergarments into double boilers full of rich melted chocolate, all in the name of creativity.

"I volunteered at the Chocolate Show last year, and it was unbelievable. So this time around I said, 'OK, I know I can do this.' And it was a no-brainer to call Dina," said Greeley.

A couple years ago, though, the fit pair may have seemed like an unlikely team to compete in such a fashion show.

IF YOU GO

WHAT: 11th Annual Chocolate Show

WHERE: Pier 94, 711 12th Ave. and 54th Street

WHEN: Opening Night Preview featuring the Fashion Show: 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Thursday. Chocolate Show: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday.

HOW MUCH: Opening night

Part of the esteemed 11th annual Chocolate Show — beginning Thursday with the fashion show and running though Sunday at Pier 94 in Manhattan — the runway affair isn't a rinky-dink performance, but rather a professional fusion of food and fashion that drew

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benefit and fashion show: \$250 (proceeds benefit Susan G. Komen for the Cure). One-day tickets for the Chocolate Show: \$28 (children under 5 free; up to two children 5 to 12 free; additional children 5 to 12 are \$8).

MORE INFORMATION/TICKETS:
Chocolateshow.com or 212-307-7171.

contributions from former "Project Runway" designers Jack Mackenroth, Kevin Christiana and Kit Scarbo; and famous pastry chefs including Zac Young, Fritz Knipschildt and Martin Howard. So how exactly did a system's

analyst for a bank and a Wall Street finance specialist get a nod to be one of the 20 teams competing in the show?

Greeley said the tasty partnership was an odd upshot resulting from a merge of cancer, cable television and hidden ambition.

"I was recovering from uterine cancer and I saw the birthday cake competitions on the Food Network and I was, like, floored," she said.

Next thing she knew, Greeley was enrolled in a confectionary program at the French Culinary Institute, where she met Sadik, a lifelong lover of chocolate.

"The rest," Greeley said, "is history."

Yes, history, like curiosity, was part of the equation for the pair, but a competition like the fashion show also requires the skill of architects, clothing designers, artists and chemists — skills for which they weren't prepared professionally, but rather genetically.

"My father was a general for the Peruvian army," said Greeley, who shows similar discipline in her award-winning cakes.

"And my family is made up of professionals, mostly doctors," added Sadik, who inherited the steady hand and meticulous nature of her father, a neurosurgeon.

After learning to work together below the shade of many hats, the pair took on the task of actually making a hat to go with their ensemble — one inspired by "X-Men" character Storm to conform to the show's superhero theme.

The outfit includes a satin cape studded with more than 100 chocolate rings, a three-layer chocolate corset modeled after the tested chocolate bra, and a chocolate belt with flashing electronics interwoven that sits above gray spandex pants and a pair of calf-high chocolate boots, which Sadik called "comfortable." And then there's the aforementioned hat.

"There's no way of knowing how long this took ... countless hours," said Greeley of the headpiece made of Callebaut Belgian chocolate and Valrhona French chocolate that weighs close to 10 pounds. "And we had to redo it once when it slid apart."

The wild headpiece is the outfit's pièce de résistance, crowned with chocolate spires, spikes and spears and weighted on either side by Manhattan-themed regalia like taxicabs and a pretty sweet replica of the Chrysler Building.

Come Thursday, the ensemble will be ready to make its way to Pier 94. Still, Greeley and Sadik said they won't be able to rest until it's off the runway, off the model and on its display mannequin after the show. As the pair has learned by watching cake competition shows, sometimes the hardest part isn't preparing your creation, but transporting it.

"The fear is always there that something will happen. You don't know if [the chocolate] is going to melt, crack, break or the model will fall," said Sadik, who recently opened her own company, Essentially Chocolate. "But we can handle it. That's the great thing about our chemistry. I'm conservative, and she's a risk-taker, and we find a medium where things work."

Come competition time, reaching this middle ground might require more than the inspiration of cancer, cable television and ambition for the giggly Greeley, though. What started in her kitchen with chocolate-covered underwear may require a cold car ride and some meds to complete.

"We're just going to take it easy and make sure the car is nice and cool for the chocolate," said Greeley. "[Transporting] something like this is something you do carefully — and maybe with a couple valiums."

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1. Silvia says: I became a big fan of Chef Greeley when I saw her in action at the competition in Maryland. Although she is high technical and skilled, she is a terrific partner to work with, she is one of those that shares her knowledge without hesitation. Her cakes are of superb quality and quite delicious too. She is a perfectionist and her creations speak for themselves.
2. Sheila says: I'm so happy for Dina, she's a great friend and chocolatier. The event she did for us was awesome. It not only looked amazing but tasted like heaven.
3. nancymb says: I've been involved in chocolate as an Independent Chocolatier for Dove Chocolate Discoveries for about 1 1/2 years now, and I'm so looking forward to attending the show and learning tips from the top pros. Chocolate is totally amazing. I'm in awe of these women and I hope to increase my chocolate knowledge & chocolate skill!

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