

Becoming an "Artista del Gusto"

Iwona Adamczyk (May 28, 2012)



Perugina School of Chocolate in collaboration with Eataly's Scuola Grande gives an opportunity to become an "Artista del Gusto" without having to travel to Italy. First classes were held this past Mother's Day and were a great success and loads of fun!

Some mothers felt extra special this past Mother's Day. It was made extra sweet, as their loved ones treated them to a Special Chocolate Class held at the newly opened [Scuola Grande](#) [2] at [Eataly](#) [3].

The classes were taught by a well-known food writer and chocolate expert, [Francine Segan](#) [4], who received training at the legendary [Perugina Scuola del Cioccolato](#) [5] in Italy. Ms. Segan specializes in writing about Italy and Italian food and wine. In December 2009, she was named USA "ambassador" for Italian sweets by [Associazione Industrie Dolciarie Italiane](#) [6] (AIDI), Italy's national association of industrial confectioners. She recently published a book on Italian desserts titled [Dolci: Italy's Sweets](#) [7].



The class began with a brief history of the [Baci chocolates](#) [8], starting with the establishment of "The Perugina Societe for the Production of Candy" in 1907 in Perugia, the capital of the Umbria region in central Italy.

Numerous stores under the [Perugina](#) [8] name and protection of the Griffin logo, a mythological figure guarding the city of Perugia since Medieval times, then opened throughout the country. The famous Bacio (Italian for kiss, Baci being the plural) was created and introduced to the public on Valentine's Day in 1922, and to this day remains unchanged.

What is inside the candy that has been around for 90 years and is as satisfying today as it was on the product's debut in the US at the 1939 World's Fair in New York, as the first flagship store opened its doors at One Fifth Avenue?

It's simple: a whole hazelnut, atop a mountain of gianduaia cream then dipped in the finest, silky dark chocolate. For those who were puzzled as to what exactly is gianduaia: "It is a European style chocolate made from a mix of chocolate and nut paste, most commonly hazelnut but sometimes almond, which can be used as a flavoring or as substitute for milk or dark chocolate" – informed Ms Segan during the discussion of the different types of chocolate.

It is not just the delicious inside of the famous chocolate that spread its name across the world, but also the particular packaging and the love story behind it.

Legend holds that the passionately in love Luisa Spagnoli, co-founder of Perugina, created the candy for her loved one, and that she would wrap each one of them in a secret love message.

It was the Perugina Art Director, Federico Seneca who suggested that this tradition be shared with the consumer. Therefore, to this day after unwrapping the famous silver, starry foil we find a thin, transparent wrapper which delivers a [sentimental message](#) [9] (now in a few languages!).

Participants in the class got to make their own box of Baci from scratch, being guided, step-by-step by the experts. While learning to temper chocolate the right way they also were educated about the importance of getting it to the right temperature, as well as received tips and tricks from the class instructor.

The class was made entertaining by some fun trivia information about Baci. For example, learning that the blue and silver box with the couple kissing under a shower of stars was designed with an overt reference to yet another "[Kiss](#) [10]"- the 1859 painting by the Italian artist Francesco Hayez.

Until you will get a chance to sign up for one of the Perugina classes and become an "Artista del Gusto" yourself, I will share one of the recipes from the class with you, so you can wow your guests at the next party you host. Just don't tell anyone you got it from me!!!

Baci Pie (serves 10)

Ingredients:

1 piecrust (store bought or homemade)

½ cup of flour

1 cup of sugar

2 eggs

½ cup (1 stick) of unsalted butter

¼ cup of Italian hazelnut liqueur such as Frangelico

18 Perugina Baci candies



Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line a 10" pie pan with the rolled out piecrust. Using an electric hand mixer beat the flour, sugar, eggs, butter and liqueur in a bowl. Pour the batter into the prepared crust. Place the Baci, nut side up into the batter. Bake for about 45 minutes until the top crust is set. Allow it to cool to room temperature before cutting. Slice and enjoy in good company with a glass of sweet Moscato!

Click [here](#) [11] for more pictures from the Chocolate making class.

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