

**USA  
WEEKEND**

- Great health news for chocolate lovers
- 5 ways to bridge the racial divide
- Tony Danza, Benjamin and ... Alan Greenspan  
Who's News

# Hi-Tech Reality Check

Gadgets are great, but are they hurting your relationships — and your body? USA WEEKEND contributing editors help you combat computer overkill.

Stephanie Oakes, the Fit Smart columnist, looks at computer hardware with Relationship columnist Dennie Hug

SOUTH JERSEY'S NEWSPAPER  
**COURIER-POST**

# EatSmart

BY JEAN CARPER

## Chocolate Cakes, Take heart

may be the best-tasting  
"medicine" ever.

**H**AVE YOU HEARD? Experts now say chocolate can be good for your heart. Our \$1 billion in Valentine's chocolates (and the 10 pounds of chocolate each of us eats yearly) may not be a health disaster. Surprising new research finds chocolate contains health-promoting chemicals similar to those in red wine, tea, and vegetables. The prestigious *England Journal of Medicine's* "Heart Watch" newsletter says "a sizeable chunk of research" suggests cocoa compounds have modest "beneficial effects on specific factors linked to heart disease." And the scientific *Journal of Nutrition* recently devoted a supplement to chocolate's "medicinal benefits."

### Essential heart benefits

**Antioxidants galore.** Chocolate is rich in cell-protecting antioxidants. A one-ounce piece of milk chocolate typically has 400 milligrams of antioxidants, much as in a glass of red wine, says chemist Joe A. Vinson of the University of Scranton. Dark chocolate has twice as much; white chocolate, none. Antioxidant activity jumped 31% in the blood of subjects at the University of California-Davis, two hours after eating 2.8 ounces of M&M's semisweet baking bits. **Anti-cholesterol.** The antioxidants in chocolate help block chemical changes in LDL cholesterol that lead to clogged



### Chocolate Valentine Cake

- 1½ cups semisweet chocolate chips
- 2 cups (19 ounce can) cooked chickpeas (garbanzo beans), drained and rinsed
- 4 eggs, or 1 cup egg substitute
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- 1 Tb. powdered sugar

In small bowl, melt chocolate in microwave oven, 2 minutes on medium power. In blender or food processor, combine beans and eggs. Add sugar, baking powder and chocolate; process until smooth. Pour batter into non-stick 9-inch heart-shaped or round cake pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes or until a knife inserted comes out clean. Cool. Sprinkle with sugar. Cut in 10 wedges. Serve with raspberry sauce.

*Chickpeas? Relax. It's delicious. Using legumes instead of flour adds fiber and protein and reduces unhealthy spikes in blood sugar.*

### Quick Microwave Raspberry Sauce

- ½ cup seedless raspberry jam
- 2 tsps. fresh lemon juice
- 1 pint fresh raspberries

In a bowl, microwave jam until melted, 1 minute. Stir in juice and berries.

**Per wedge with sauce:**  
318 calories, 10g fat (4.8g saturated), 56g carbohydrates, 2.8g fiber, 5.8g protein, 116mg sodium.

arteries. In fact, Vinson found chocolate's antioxidants better than vitamin C at detoxifying LDLs. Research by Penny Kris-Etherton at Pennsylvania State University shows diets rich in dark chocolate or cocoa powder raise good HDL cholesterol. Previously, she found eating a milk chocolate bar daily for a month (in place of another high-carb snack) did not raise men's bad cholesterol.

► **Clot blocker.** Chocolate antioxidants

act like aspirin to reduce blood platelet stickiness and thus the clotting that triggers heart attacks and strokes. In a recent study, 30 subjects drank water, a caffeine drink or a cocoa drink containing 1.5 times the antioxidants in typical hot cocoa. The cocoa significantly delayed blood-clotting time.

► **Vessel relaxant.** Good vascular function (how well blood vessels relax) helps prevent heart disease, high blood pres-

sure and artery clogging. Chocolate's antioxidants (called procyanidins) relax vessels by increasing the chemical nitric oxide, according to new studies at the University of California, Davis.

### You may wonder ...

► **Won't chocolate make me gain weight?** Chocolate packs fat and sugar, but overindulging does put on pounds. Research shows chocolate is not a prime cause of obesity, studies worldwide find. The average person eats twice as much chocolate per year as we do — 22 pounds a year — and have one of the lowest obesity rates.

► **Isn't chocolate full of saturated fat, the type that clogs arteries?** About 60% of chocolate's fat is saturated, but a typical chocolate bar contains only 30 grams of saturated fat, so bingeing on chocolate drives up your intake of saturated fat. But moderate amounts of chocolate appear harmless. Extensive research at Harvard found women who ate chocolate bars three or four times a week were no more apt to have heart disease than women who rarely ate chocolate.

► **Isn't the sugar in chocolate unhealthy?** In excess, yes. But a chocolate bar's glycemic index — a measure of ability to drive up blood sugar — is surprisingly low, about like oatmeal.

► **What about chocolate's caffeine?** A dark chocolate bar's 10-30mg is about the same as the 100mg in a cup of coffee.

► **Isn't most research funded by the chocolate industry?** Yes, but it's backed by reputable scientists at leading universities and published in excellent scientific journals. Quaker paid for original research on oats; that doesn't make it untrue. **W**



Health journalist JEAN CARPER is the author of *Your Mind Can Heal Your Brain* (HARPERCOLLINS, \$26.95).

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