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# Arlington CONNECTION

October 2008

## Chocolatier Thrives In Arlington

David Schultz

**An entrepreneurial pastry chef tried to capitalize on the growing popularity of high-end chocolates.**

In a matter of little more than a decade, coffee has gone from a watered-down afterthought, guzzled with breakfast or on breaks at work, to a high-status – and often high-priced – delicacy.

Jason Andelman thinks that chocolate will soon be a part of this phenomenon of a common commodity developing a high-end market. "It's definitely a growing trend," he said. Andelman is the owner of Artisan Confections, a chocolate shop located in Arlington on Lee Highway just west of Glebe Road. He worked in a number of Washington-area restaurants over the years as a pastry chef before opening his own store three years ago. Chocolate has been a lifelong passion

for the Fairfax County native, but Andelman only began making chocolates professionally in 2001. At first he sold them over the Internet and to wholesalers. But then, Andelman saw an opportunity to expand his business. "There's not a whole lot of high-end chocolates [stores] here in the area," he said. "That's one of the reasons I started the business. There's really a market for this."

Andelman's shop sells bonbons, chocolate bars and a hot chocolate mix along with chocolate covered almonds, butter crunch and other sweet delights. He imports his chocolate directly from France and makes all his products on site for maximum freshness. Reflecting recent chocolate trends, Andelman said that dark chocolates rather than milk chocolates or white chocolates constitute the majority of his business.

"I think that's a new trend in the last five years," he said. "People will come in and say 'What's your darkest chocolate?' ... The taste is more indicative of the actual bean. I think people like that."

So far, Artisan Confections is small. The store only has one permanent employee other than Andelman, although it does hire temporary workers during holiday seasons. But Andelman said that the store's small-business feel is what draws customers in.

"People like supporting a local business," he said, "If you give someone an option of coming here or going to a national chain they'll come here, especially people in Arlington."

"That's what we always wanted the business to be," he added. "We didn't want it to be a huge thing. We wanted to keep it small and make good quality stuff. Once you start getting too big you



lose your focus."

Because more than 90 percent of Artisan Confections' sales are gift purchases, Andelman said, his business experiences ebbs and flows based on the time of year. "It's busy from October to May," he said. "Summer is pretty slow." But Andelman said that, to a certain extent, his line of business is recession-proof because many people are willing to spend money on gifts for other people even in bad economic times.

And like any good local businessman, Andelman is working hard to become acquainted with his clientele, some of whom can be classified as genuine chocoholics, he said.

"The average person is just someone who lives within a few miles of the store," he said. "[They buy mostly] gift items. But we do have people who come in on a regular basis to get their fix."

