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FOOD

Book Report

Simple Ways to Master the Sweet and the Savory

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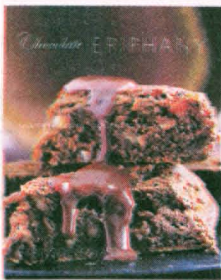
These spring cookbooks come from two men with third-generation pedigrees in the always-interesting fields of sweets and seafood. Their experience provides a master's touch:

■ **"Chocolate Epiphany: Exceptional Cookies, Cakes, and Confections for Everyone,"** by François Payard, with Anne E. McBride (Crown, April 2008; \$35): He is the well-tempered and properly enrobed king of chocolate confections. That's why Payard's soon-to-be-released third cookbook is a must-have for those who enjoy interacting with chocolate in the kitchen.

The pastry chef owns five bistros worldwide that bear his name; last year, he added an international "best pastry chef" honor from Relais Desserts to an already-impressive larder of accolades.

In this book, however, Payard shares chocolate insights and many recipes that are far from highfalutin. He's confident enough to extol the virtues of white chocolate, which is sometimes snubbed, and reveals his maximum cacao preference for dark chocolate: no more than 72 percent, because he finds that anything higher is too bitter. He also has managed to upgrade a certain famous crisped rice cereal treat while keeping the fixings simple (see recipe, Page F10).

The range of 100 thoughtfully composed recipes reflects successful pairings with ingredients made happy by their association with Payard's favorite medium: cranberries and chestnuts, hazelnuts, sweet potato, spiced apricots and popcorn. And there are his versions of such standards as flourless chocolate and Paris-Brest cakes, financiers and biscotti.



BY JULIA ERWIN — THE WASHINGTON POST

Chocolate Rice Crispies

Makes 66 to 72 balls

Here, a famous pastry chef has applied finesse to a beloved snack. François Payard's treats come together in minutes, with a smooth, creamy marshmallow base that keeps them chewy.

Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days. Do not refrigerate, or the balls will harden. Adapted from his "Chocolate Epiphany" (Clarkson Potter, May 2008).

INGREDIENTS

- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter
- ½ cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
- 2 10.5-ounce bags mini marshmallows
- 10 cups crisped rice cereal (from one 12-ounce box)
- ¾ cup semisweet mini chocolate morsels

DIRECTIONS

- Combine the butter and cocoa powder in a large saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring to combine as the butter melts completely. Add the marshmallows and let them soften and melt; stir to keep them from burning, if necessary.
- Remove the saucepan from the heat and add the crisped rice cereal, stirring until it is well

coated with the marshmallow mixture. Add half of the chocolate morsels; mix well. Let the mixture cool for about 5 minutes, then add the remaining chocolate morsels. Let the mixture cool to room temperature.

- Meanwhile, line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper or wax paper. Lightly grease your hands with nonstick cooking oil spray.
- Use your hands to shape some of the coated cereal mixture into a golf ball-size ball. Place on the baking sheet and repeat with the remaining mixture.
- When the balls have set (feeling slightly dry to the touch), store them in an airtight container.

NUTRITION | Per ball (based on 72): 62 calories, 0 g protein, 13 g carbohydrates, 2 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 3 mg cholesterol, 46 mg sodium, 0 g dietary fiber

Recipe tested by Bonnie S. Benwick; e-mail questions to food@washpost.com.