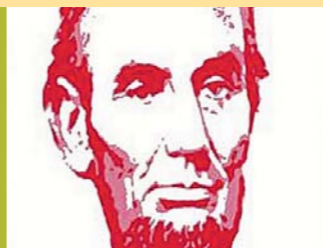


A welcome evil

“Smallville” actress Cassidy Freeman has big, bad shoes to fill, but she feels “lucky to have gotten such a complex character.”
Showtime | E7



Central library event
Lincoln's role in the rise of railroads: 6:30 tonight: 816-701-3407.



A call away
Area services can offer help in domestic violence situations. | E8



No more excuses
Refreshing pencil hues for a tidy workspace: seejanework.com.

FYI | Food

“THE BEAUTY OF THE CACAO IS THE FIRST AND FOREMOST THING YOU TASTE IN THE CHOCOLATE.” ALAN MCCLURE



PHOTOS BY JILL TOYOSHIBA | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Alan McClure of Patric Chocolate is a student of chocolate and all aspects of making it, regularly searching the Internet, blogging and studying reference books from his office.

FARMER'S ART | Single-origin, bean-to-bar chocolate

CHOCOLATE EPIPHANY

Former religious studies student Alan McClure coaxes complex flavors from Madagascar cacao beans.

By ANNE BROCKHOFF
Special to The Star

Columbia | Blame it on France. That's where Alan McClure first savored the chocolate that sparked his epiphany.

French chocolate was “so unlike anything I'd ever had here or even imagined could exist,” McClure says. “That changed my whole perspective on chocolate.”

McClure returned home to Columbia, where chocolate grew into an all-absorbing passion. He tasted more European and American bars, read books and called artisanal chocolate makers with questions. He experimented with cacao beans (the raw material for chocolate, pronounced kah-KAY-oh), wrote a business plan and searched out equipment.

In 2007 McClure opened Patric Chocolate and began making micro-batches of dark chocolate bars using organic cacao beans from Madagascar. Never heard of such a thing? You're not alone. Nestle, Mars and other mass-production behemoths long dominated the U.S. chocolate industry until 1996.

That's when Scharffen Berger started

making chocolate from scratch in Berkeley, Calif., and touched off what chocolate expert Carole Bloom calls a revolution.

“They broke the trail, and lots of others followed,” says Bloom, author of *The Essential Baker* (John Wiley & Sons, \$40). “It's definitely an emerging trend.”

McClure is among a growing cadre of chocolate fanatics who turn beans into bars, thus reshaping consumer ideas of what chocolate can be — complex and intense, often with tasting notes to rival any winemaker's.

Take the label on Patric Chocolate's 67 percent Madagascar bar (the percentage denotes cocoa content). It promises plum



The flavors of chocolate can be as complex as any found in wine.

preserves, red fruits and butter-hazelnut-toffee flavors, while the 70 percent Madagascar bar's refers to citrus, red wine and berry notes.

But this is not confectionery. None of these flavors is added. The only ingredients are cacao beans, sugar and, in some cases,

cocoa butter that McClure presses himself. Each bar's characteristics are determined entirely by the cacao and how it was processed, McClure says.

“The beauty of the cacao is the first and foremost thing you taste in the chocolate,” McClure says. “It's not the sugar, or vanilla, or any other flavoring that's been added. It's the cacao.”

SEE MCCLURE | E5

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COMMENTARY

‘SHOPAHOLIC’ SHOULD BE A CAUTIONARY TALE OF TIMES

Rebecca Bloomwood looks fabulous. Designer gear from head to toe, she wears plush cardigans, daring boots and scarves so expensive that even on sale they cost \$120. Even the most stylish fashionista would drool over her wardrobe. It's probably worth a starter condo. But the truth is, Becky Bloomwood is lame. She might be the star of Sophie Kinsella's best-selling book *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, but she is nobody's heroine. A movie version, out this Friday, explores the life of 25-year-old Rebecca. She loves shopping, eating out, oh, and shopping. Because of this, she's under a mountain of debt. And

JENEÉ OSTERHELDT



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get this — her career? She's a financial journalist. The thing is, Rebecca doesn't really do her job. She barely pays attention at press conferences.

SEE JENEÉ | E8

Isla Fisher stars in “Confessions of a Shopaholic.”

TOUCHSTONE PICTURES



WEIRD NEWS

So now they're going after kitchen utensils? In Plant City, Fla., in December, Robert Thompson and Taurus Morris were charged with armed burglary after taking a woman's eggbeater from her at knifepoint. It was not reported why they wanted the eggbeater or why the victim had to be threatened at knifepoint to get it.

FYI INSIDE

Bob Costas' switch to MLB Network is a smart move. | E7
Sissy Spacek's singer/songwriter daughter Schuyler Fisk has good stuff. | E7

FITS OF FEBRUARY

F.I.T. is a fitting acronym

By JAMES A. FUSSELL
The Kansas City Star

When you put the letters F-I-T together, they spell fit, as in physically fit.

But if you add a few periods, the resulting acronym can mean dozens of different things. Here are just one dozen meanings fit for a F.I.T. acronym.

Federal Income Tax: The part of your earnings you pay to the federal government.

First Indication of Trouble: A letter saying you're being audited.

Florida Institute of Technology: A university celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Failure in Test: What you'll experience at that university if you don't study.

Foreign Independent Traveler: A lone sojourner having new experiences overseas.

Federal Investigation Team: Group that asks questions if that sojourner disappears.

Fitness Improvement Training: Way to help soldiers maintain fitness standards.

Frequently in Trouble: What soldiers will be if they fall below those standards.

Foundation to Improve Television: A reform group in Boston.

Facing It Together: A South Florida nonprofit that improves the lives of people with craniofacial disorders.

Foundation for Intercultural Travel: High school student exchange program.

Filtering and Identification Tool: Designed for linear system identification of continuous time domain systems. Don't ask.

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