Years melt away as professor makes chocolate replica of ancient statue

Ian Titterton takes chocolate seriously. Plenty of people like chocolate. Some take it seriously in a silly sort of way.

The Clark College culinary professor can appreciate that view, and has examples of chocolate-covered wit and wisdom posted on the wall of his kitchen/classroom.

Things like...

"There's a thin person in me screaming to get out, but I keep her sedated with chocolate."

And...

"If you've got melted chocolate on your hands, you're eating it too slowly."

People who share that philosophy have provided a good living for Titterton, formerly the executive chocolatier at Moonstruck Chocolates in Portland. But chocolate also offered Titterton a link with an artist who lived in the area eight centuries ago, an opportunity he calls almost a spiritual experience.

Titterton created chocolate replicas of several artifacts for the recent Clark County Historical Museum fundraising auction. They included a statue of a human figure, about 20 inches long, carved from basalt.

The sculpture was found in the 1940s in the Columbia Slough, near Camas. It dates to around 1200 AD, said Susan Tissof, the museum's executive director.

"I got such a charge out of that," Titterton said after sculpting a chocolate twin of the stone figure. "There was something magical to hold the real one, feel the grooves and contours, then use the heat from my hands to follow those patterns and mimic them in chocolate."

The only thing close to that experience, from a chocolate standpoint, came a few years ago when he traveled to the Central American country of Belize. "I never saw it in its first form," he said. During a visit to a plantation, "I felt a cacao bud growing on a tree. I saw it dried by Mayans, then taken to a co-op."

Finger-lickin' gone

While the stone sculpture might be around for another 800 years, Titterton's chocolate replica is nothing but a tasty memory.

It was auctioned off for $275. The winning bidder — Oregon State Auditor Gary Blackmer — took it to work to share with people in his office.

It was gone in two days.

By CRAIG BROWN
Columbia-staff writer

RIDGEFIELD — As far as fish go, the Great River of the West seems to offer a relatively simple story. Only 30 species of fishes are common in the Columbia River basin, and of those, only 30 are native.

"That's not very many," said Dennis Dauble, a Richland-based author, lecturer and scientist. Sunday, he was in Clark County, where he gave a talk on the history of fish to a small group at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.

But more than 30 years of documented interaction between humans and fish weave a complex tale that is playing out today, from bass clubs in Eastern Washington to tribal fishermen along the lower Columbia.

After retiring from a career studying fish for the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Dauble researched historical and modern accounts of the basin, trying to piece together a history of fish and humans. His resulting book is FISH, Page C6

Did you know?

• Invasive fish species were introduced when settlers from the East and Midwest pined for the white-meat fish they remembered from home, according to 20th century Oregonian journalist BenHur Lampman. The only indigenous white-meat fish here were bony or made poor food.

• Blame the railroad for invasive fish. By improving transportation, railways allowed live fish and fish eggs to be transported from east to west.

• Carp got their introduction into the Columbia River in the late 1880s, when an Army general touted them as a good food fish to raise in backyard ponds. When the Columbia flooded, some ponds were inundated and their carp were washed into the river.