

Chocolate is Good!!

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Director of the Imperial Choir



Although chocolate isn't ideally good for the voice or throat before singing, I find that, after a great rehearsal, it is an excellent treat. Birthday treats, holiday celebrations, new additions to the family - any excuse really and we celebrate with a little chocolate surprise.

I was very honoured when I was asked by the Imperial Band Club to take over directing the Ladies Choir. It was a very scary position to fill as I was replacing Mrs Shirley Helleur. A hard act to follow as they say! However, I decided to take up the post as I knew I could do the job and hopefully take the ladies on to further glory.

I had a few worries before I started. Would I get on with the ladies? Would they get on with me? Would they get used to the way I work, and did I want to give up every Thursday evening on top of my other commitments? On the bright side, there were many positive points. Here was a willing group of lovely ladies ready to learn and give up their own precious spare time. I would be able to compose and arrange things for them, which I enjoy doing. Finally, I could share and perform some of the beautiful music I have enjoyed over the years. So, we began our journey together earlier in the year, and some seven months later I am still enjoying the ride.

It was a busy first quarter of the year. By the end of April, we had taken part in one exhibition opening at the Ċentru, one concert for Palm Sunday with the band, and a wedding mass at the Sanctuary, all of this using mostly new material.

We have also gone digital! We now have a Facebook page for the choir's use. It has made sharing information about rehearsals and music so easy. The members can also get their new music as mp3s and pdfs so they can do their homework. (Dropbox next!)

Since April we have not stopped. We sang at the St John Bonfire night in the Parish Square

with the Band and, at the beginning of June, the ladies had the privilege of singing at a mass for Sister Antonietta to celebrate fifty years since leaving her home in Mellieħa to enter a convent life. It was a lovely surprise for her when we ended the service with the Innu lill-Madonna Tal-Mellieħa

We are now preparing for the feast programme - again new material. The months have really flown by and it is a pity that we have no time to reflect on what we have achieved. There have been many comments as to how beautiful the ladies sound - especially in the Sanctuary Church and the Convent in Valletta. We have worked hard on producing a more rounded sound. We have worked on breathing and support, dynamics and diction, also strategies to help sight reading as many of the choir do not read music - yet!

I wish they could hear, as I can when I'm out in front of them, the 'Champagne' moments when they sound sublime. It is really lovely! Rich, like dark chocolate cream - it is beautiful. I am very proud of what 'my ladies' have achieved so far.

Oh, the chocolate? My treat for them when I can, is a plate of fresh chocolate brownies or a lovely gluten free chocolate baked fridge cake. If you want to treat yourself too here are the recipes:

The Gluten-free Chocolate Fridge Cake

½ cup of water, ¼ tsp of salt, 227g unsalted butter, 6 eggs, 150g white sugar and 500g of dark chocolate.

- Set oven to 150 deg.
- Grease 10" round cake tin
- In a small pan over a medium heat, combine sugar, salt and water. Stir until dissolved and set aside.
- In a large bowl over a pan of boiling water melt the chocolate then pour into an electric mixing

bowl. Cut butter into pieces and beat into the chocolate a bit at a time.

- Beat in the sugar water then beat the eggs in one at a time.
- Pour the batter into the cake tin and place into a water bath of boiling water (a meat tray is good for this).
- Bake for 45 mins (centre will look wet but don't worry) then cool and place in refrigerator overnight.
- Take out of cake tin, cut up and enjoy!

The Chocolate Brownies are even easier!

- Preheat oven – 180deg
- Grease a 22 x 33 cm tin or (something close to

that - my meat tin does it again)

- Mix the following ingredients in order in a large electric mixing bowl:-
- 400g caster sugar, 225g butter, 60g cocoa powder, 1 tsp vanilla extract, 4 eggs, 225g plain flour, ½ tsp baking powder and ½ tsp of salt.
- Mix till smooth.
- Bake for 25 mins or until a knife comes out clean from the centre of the cake.
- Cool and slice into squares
- Again – enjoy!

Wishing you and your families a very happy feast.

Interested in joining the Imperial Choir?

New Members Welcome!

Contact us on info@imperialbandclub.com

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