



Fab Figs: Sweet Dreams Do Come True

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By **Ani Minasian**

It started with a craving, a deep longing to once again taste that Spanish traditional treat of luscious dried figs filled with smooth chocolate ganache. Those mild, subtle flavors and the contrasting textures all in one mouthful... The memory was haunting her and wouldn't go away. She had been a loyal fan of a Seattle chocolatier's seasonal offering of chocolate-filled figs, but after resettling here in the Coachella Valley, there was a nagging hole where those figs used to be.

It was that yearning that launched foodie and passionate home cook Heidi Epling into a year-long exploration to develop what would eventually become her Fab Figs: juicy Calimyrna and Black Mission figs from Central California filled with a dark or white chocolate ganache (a soft but rich mix of chocolate, cream and port). As she experimented in her Palm Springs kitchen with variations of her recipe, she filled the stockings (and stomachs) of friends and family with her creations. Finally, with

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the encouragement of a grateful friend and fan of her figs, Heidi began considering the feasibility of marketing and selling the confections as a business. One year and two months after taking the initial leap, Fab Figs is a hit, and Heidi's day job is a thing of the past.

While business is booming, Epling is still hand-making each Fab Fig herself (in a commercial kitchen now), from piping her ganache into each pitted fig, to foil-wrapping and packaging them in retail-ready boxes and bags. (How does she do it? She's extremely efficient—her record is up to 300 figs a day!) She personally handles all sales at local fairs in Palm Springs and online sales on her website. She has also run multiple holiday sales events with sell-out success on Fab.com, a designer-to-consumer e-commerce site. And she's not resting on any laurels either, as she continues



White Chocolate Fab Figs from the Palm Springs Visitor Center.

experimenting with new flavors and products (her ganache recipe is taking on two new flavors: dark chocolate espresso and white chocolate amaretto).

Already she has encountered the challenge of working with seasonal ingredients. The availability of the figs varies with the farmers' annual harvest, and without advance contracts with the suppliers, Epling faces the risk of running out of her jumbo Calimyrna dried figs. She has managed to dodge that bullet by introducing new products using Sierra and Black Mission figs, and will be prepared next year for the increasing demand for her products.

Nevertheless, Epling could not be happier. She has left behind a successful career in event and tour management yet she has never felt more in her element. She loves the creativity of developing

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Heidi Eplinginto displays some Fab Figs.

products as well as their packaging (she designed the logo herself) and hints at new products to be unveiled soon. All the while, she is beaming—and

why not? She's living the sweetest version of the American dream.

Fab Figs are now available at the Palm Springs Visitor Center, and at discounted rates on Thursday nights at VillageFest(Downtown Palm Springs) and Saturdays at the Open Air Market (adjacent to the Spa Resort Casino). Online purchases can be made at fabfigs.com.

~Ani Minasian is a freelance writer based in Palm Springs who also publishes a blog dedicated to chocoholics and the object of their obsession: chocoholicscentral.blogspot.com.~



White Chocolate Fab Figs

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