

Wandering & Wondering



John Maybury

GREEN GIFTS

Why not help the poor old tired Earth this holiday season when you make your gift list:

- Songbird coffee and chocolate are organic, fair-traded, and songbird-friendly. Visit groundsforschange.com or call 1-800-796-6820.
- Ladybug sells organic chocolate from Central America. Visit chocolatebar.com or call 1-800-293-0160
- Organic Bouquet in Novato ships sustainably raised flowers. Visit organicbouquet.com or call 1-888-899-2468.
- How about healthy, natural fruit baskets? Visit Organic Extravaganza at proflowers.com or call 1-800-862-9958. Send organic fruits, nuts, and seed samplers from diamondorganics.com or call 1-888-ORGANIC in Moss Landing.

COCO LOCO

Speaking of chocolate (which is something I like to do this time of year), Aztec legend says that the good god Quetzalcoatl came to earth with a cacao bean tree as a gift to mankind—consolation for our having to live in this hell



on earth. The word “chocolate” itself comes from the Greek for “food of the gods.” Aztec chocolate was a beverage called “chocolatl,” which probably also included some spices such as cinnamon. But when the sweet dark brown treat made its way back to Europe, where it was an instant sensation, just as coffee had been when the conquistadors brought it back from the New World, it also became a confection: chocolate for eating. Today, most Europeans consume on average some 20 pounds of chocolate a year, compared to the average American’s intake of about half that amount. Psychiatrists long have noted that chocolate eating peaks during the winter doldrums. So there again you have that familiar theme: chocolate as consolation. Physiologically, humans have another connection to the bean: Cocoa butter’s melting point is 98.6 degrees. (Source: Vicki Davis, Newhouse News Service)

RIGHT ON

I read about UPS studying its routes and discovering that it is more fuel-efficient to make right turns only, even if it takes a little bit longer and farther to get to the delivery. This is because eliminat-

ing left turns also eliminates idling time waiting for traffic to clear and results in fewer accidents. There’s another thing Brown can do for you: smart thinking.

YES WE CAN

A new French high-speed train has reached 224 miles per hour on a test track. (Think San Francisco-Los Angeles in two hours.) California has voted to build high-speed trains, so get ready to fly by rail.

GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Just the other day, medical experts announced that cancer would soon pass heart disease as the Number 1 killer in the world, thanks to increasing numbers of cigarette smokers in Asian countries, where the tobacco industry has refocused its sales efforts.



MONARCH SEASON

This is the time of year to get out and see migrating monarch butterflies. These beautiful black-and-orange creatures take refuge in eucalyptus groves to rest awhile on their journeys south. The Greater Bay Area is lucky to have several monarch layover spots: San Leandro (1-510-577-6085 or email butterflynaturalist@earthlink.net); Fremont (1-510-796-0199 or visit

ebparks.org/parks/ardenwood); Santa Cruz (1-831-423-4609, 1-831-420-5270, 1-831-429-2850); Pacific Grove (1-831-648-5716, 1-831-648-5730 or pgmuseum.org); Point Lobos (1-831-624-4909). Be sure to go on a mild, calm day. The butterflies do not like wind. It is a truly awesome experience to stand in a eucalyptus grove and look up at thousands and thousands of monarchs fluttering in the sunlight and shade.



SITSEER

- Animal rescue flights: pilotsnpaws.org
- Pacifica jewelry designs from nature: stephaniehdesigns.com
- L.A.’s Totally Awesome nontoxic all-purpose cleaner (it really works and it costs about a dollar): lastotallyawesome.com

SWAMI SEZ

“No matter how hard it is raining, two pirates may never share an umbrella. In fact, no self-respecting pirate would even be caught dead using an umbrella.” (Pirate Law #30)

MAYBURRITOVILLE

- Goofbuster.com
- PacificaRiptide.com
- PacificaTribune.com
- WanderingAndWondering.com
- e: mayburrito@goofbuster.com