

VALERIE & PETER



In Colorado at linguistics training

I can't believe we've come full circle and it's Christmas time again. This year has seemed like more of a whirlwind than ever before. I suppose that's to be expected in the lives of two people preparing to go overseas as missionaries. Though this year has seen many changes and transitions, it's been full of amazing blessings and relational riches too.

Peter said goodbye to his role as associate pastor with our home church, Hope Community Church, at the end of 2009. The church was able to find a replacement relatively quickly. We still attend once a month, between all of our other preparatory activities, and really enjoy the worship under the new leader.

In January, we started taking Japanese language lessons with Kaori, a lady who holds classes at the library down the street. It's been really good to learn how to say basic phrases, read some of the characters, and learn about the Japanese culture. That month we also went to a "support bootcamp" course, where we learnt about missions and fundraising. It was quite an enlightening time, and made February's transition to ministry partnership development much more enjoyable.

Since February, we've been juggling Japanese language learning, ministry partnership development, Peter's part-time job, and my full-time one. Needless to say, it's been a busy time, and strange to always be moving around as we meet with people; we quite feel like nomads!

In August my sister moved out after having lived with us for four years. I also got sick and was off of work for several months. It took awhile to get a diagnosis, but with the help of a naturopathic doctor it finally came: a toxic overload from some medications I'd been on for awhile to handle pain related to my spinal issues. When I went onto a regimen to correct this I saw substantial improvement and am almost back to normal.

What an amazing time this was, though. I was completely wiped out physically, but spiritually I can't imagine a richer experience. I can't help but look back on those months as a real time of God's tenderness, with many lessons learnt along the way (if you'd like to read more, I've been blogging pretty regularly at www.peterandvalerie.com).

In November, Peter and I attended a "language acquisition course". Basically, it was an intense two-week linguistics course which trained our ears to hear, and mouths to pronounce, a variety of sounds that aren't present in the English language. The thinking is that if our ears are more tuned to hear these different sounds, then we will have better accents in Japanese. This course also gave us many new tools to use in the language learning process. It was very encouraging, and helped to dispel a lot of our fears about communication while in Japan.

That brings us back to this month: December. We have so enjoyed getting together with many of you over the past year, and are looking forward to more visits in the coming months. This will be our last Christmas with our families before heading off to Japan (hopefully in March, funds pending). As you get out your trees and tinsel, we hope that you will make a chance to sit down with some cider and enjoy the simplicity of life. As one of my favourite poems puts it: "for in the dew of little things, the heart finds its morning and is refreshed."

Chocolate Truffles

I always feel like a magician making this recipe: one moment I'm mixing ingredients together, and presto! suddenly they've transformed into truffle material!
(See reverse for the recipe)





Chocolate Truffles

Makes 3 Dozen Truffles.

Preparation time: 1.5 hours

Chilling time: 2 hours

Ingredients

1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened

2 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar

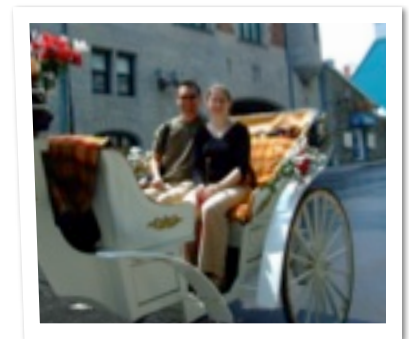
1/2 cup cocoa

1/4 cup heavy or whipping cream

1 1/2 tsp vanilla

Centres: pecan/walnut halves, whole almonds/cashews, after-dinner mints

Coatings: confectioner's sugar, flakes coconut, chopped nuts



Directions

- 1. Cream butter in a large mixing bowl. Combine confectioners' sugar and the cocoa. Add alternately with cream and vanilla to the butter. Blend well.*
- 2. Chill until firm. Shape small amount of mixture around desired centre; roll into 1-inch balls. Drop into desired coating and turn until well-covered. Chill until firm.*
- 3. Keep chilled until ready to give away or eat.*

