

There's chocolate in the air

BY ALEXANDRA LE TELLIER

It's every dieter's dream: fat-free, no-calorie chocolate. That's just what biomedical engineer David Edwards has invented with Le Whif, aerosolized chocolate dispensed from an inhaler. It doesn't provide the rich, creamy texture of Godiva, of course, but it does aim to satisfy cravings at less than 1 calorie per hit.

The modified inhaler is shaped in such a way that the sweet chocolate powder lands on your taste buds; and the particles are just large enough that there's no risk of entrance into your lungs. Why invent Le Whif? "It seemed to us that eating was tending toward breathing," Edwards says on his website, explaining that over the centuries people have consumed smaller amounts of food. "With a mix of culinary art and aerosol science, we've helped move eating habits to their logical conclusion. We call it whiffing."

Edwards, the Gordon McKay professor of the practice of biomedical engineering at Harvard University, has focused his scientific research on how to deliver

antibiotics and vaccines to the lungs via aerosol instead of needles. Which brings up the question: Is he the Joaquin Phoenix of the science community? It seems entirely possible that his inhalable chocolate is a practical joke, just like Phoenix claiming to have given up his serious acting career for hip-hop. Then again, Edwards could be dead serious.

It's hard to tell, especially considering that he works alongside students and artists at Le Laboratoire, his Paris laboratory that doubles as an art gallery. (Comparisons to Andy Warhol's Factory are unavoidable.) Perhaps his graphic novel, "Whiff," will provide some clarity. The story is based on how he came up with his invention and, though it blends fact and fiction, he says the book "doesn't lie about the process."

Le Whif is available for purchase at www.laboshop.fr and comes in four flavors: plain, mint chocolate, raspberry chocolate and mango chocolate.

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Sweetness: Le Whif is aerosolized chocolate dispensed from an inhaler.