

# A chocolate shop for connoisseurs

## Alegio's treats hail from abroad

BY BREENA KERR  
Daily Post Staff Writer

Chocolate Alegio, Palo Alto's new sweets shop, is like a wine tasting room for chocolate connoisseurs.

Tucked in the 601-square-foot store at 522 Bryant St., Alegio is painted with lively reds and covered in maps and pictures of the African jungle for a museum-of-modern-art-meets-Amazon-safari feel.

When you walk in, you're likely to meet Panos Panagos, a store manager, who will usher you inside and introduce you to the store's particular brand of chocolate purism.

"Self-respect, integrity and, above all, honesty. That's the chocolate we have," he said, as he sat behind the tasting counter in a panama hat and used a gloved hand to break pieces of chocolate off a massive bar.

### Seeking perfect chocolate

Panagos, a Greek, self-proclaimed former nihilist who grew up hating chocolate, said his life changed when he met Claudio Corallo, a Florentine who moved to Africa in his early 20s to chase the perfect coffee bean. But when



**PANOS PANAGOS** is a store manager at Alegio, an upscale chocolate shop that opened in downtown Palo Alto. Post photo by Breena Kerr.

civil war broke out in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Corallo's wife and children fled to Sao Tome and Principe, and Corallo found himself on the island that is now known as the home of the perfect cacao bean.

According to Panagos, "Corallo is to chocolate what Steve Jobs was to computers," and the result is Alegio chocolate.

Alegio is one of four stores that ship the chocolate from Sao Tome and Prin-

cipe. Another is in Berkeley and the others are in Switzerland.

### The enduring taste

Because Sao Tome has remained largely wild and unspoiled, Panagos said, "the trees have been frozen in time. Our chocolate is the way chocolate used to taste 200 years ago."

And Panagos may be right. Without vanilla and soy lecithin, additives found in almost all chocolate bars, Alegio

chocolate has a distinctively strong and pure flavor.

"You have to taste it to understand," Panagos says, as he hands out tiny pieces of the dark brown bars and gives instructions — "Place it into your mouth and wait until it gets warm, then bite three or four times ... then wait for it ... listen to what the chocolate has to say to you."

Alegio has 14 different types of chocolate with varying degrees of cacao content (though none has less than 70%) and additions, like grapes, orange, ginger, coffee and salt and pepper.

Prices range from \$12 to \$35, depending on the size of the bar.

### It's all organic

The chocolates, Panagos said, are all organic and fair trade.

Stashed inside a drawer of the tasting counter, Panagos also keeps bars from his competitors, the kinds that can be found in the chocolate section of upscale groceries for \$3 to \$6 a bar, just in case visitors aren't convinced without doing a comparison.

"When another chocolate comes along and it's better," he said, "we'll be the first ones to admit it." Until then, Panagos said, he'll sell this chocolate.

The store is open for business, but will have its official opening in two to three weeks.

# Details emerge about alleged bomber brothers

Tamerlan Tsarnaev was an amateur boxer with muscular arms and enough brio to arrive at a sparring session without protective gear. His younger brother



TAMERLAN

er Dzhokhar was popular in high school, won a city scholarship for college and liked to hang out with Russian friends off-campus.

Details of two lives, suddenly infamous, came to light yesterday. Overnight, two men previously seen only in grainy camera images were revealed to be ethnic Chechen brothers suspected in a

horrific act of terrorism. Tamerlan was dead; his 19-year-old brother would be captured after a furious manhunt that shut down much of Boston.

But the details of their lives shed precious little light on the most vexing question: Why would two brothers who came to America a decade ago turn on their adopted home with an attack on a cherished tradition, the Boston Marathon?

The Tsarnaev family arrived in the United States, seeking refuge from strife in their homeland. "Why people go to America? You know why," the fa-

ther, Anzor Tsarnaev, said in an interview from Russia, where he lives now. "Our political system in Russia. Chechens were persecuted in Kyrgyzstan, they were problems." The family had moved from Kyrgyzstan to Dagestan, a predominantly Muslim republic in Russia's North Caucasus that has become an epicenter of the Islamic insurgency that spilled over from Chechnya.

The father set up as an auto mechanic, and the two boys (there were two sisters, too) went to school. Dzhokhar, at least, attended the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, a prestigious public

school just blocks from Harvard Yard.

Tamerlan, who was 26 when he was killed overnight in a shootout, dropped out after studying accounting at Bunker Hill Community College for just three semesters.

"I don't have a single American friend. I don't understand them," he was quoted as saying in a photo package that appeared in a Boston University student magazine in 2010.

He identified himself then as a Muslim and said he did not drink or smoke: "God said no alcohol." He said he hoped to fight for the U.S. Olympic team.

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