

The Sweet Treats ‘Chocolate’ Short Story Contest 2021

- Opening date:** 4 January 2021 – 17.00 AEST (5.00pm Sydney time). **Online entries only.**
- Closing date:** 25 January 2021 – 17.00 AEST (5.00pm Sydney time).
- Eligibility:** RWAustralia members only. All membership categories are eligible (Aspiring, Emerging and Established). Entry must not be commercially available/contracted.
- Entry fee:** AU\$33.00 per entry (GST incl.)
- Judging:** The Sweet Treats Short Story Competition will be judged by a mix of reader and writer judges.
- Entry specifications:** A 3,000-word romantic short story that uses the term ‘Chocolate’ as an integral part of the story and must be on the ‘sweet’ side – no sexually explicit scenes are allowed.
- Clarification Medium Heat Level (No Explicit Scenes):**
Equivalent to PG13 rated movie.
Sizzle and sensual usually with focus on feelings, emotions and tension/attraction rather than body parts. References to intimacy are okay, but nothing graphic. Descriptions of physical intimacy will happen “behind closed doors”. There’s still plenty of sexy, still plenty of heart.
- No. of entries:** Maximum of TWO entries per person
- Prizes:** The top-scoring 12 to 14 stories will have the opportunity to be published in our 2021 Sweet Treats ‘Chocolate’ Anthology.
- How to enter:** Go to the RWA website and click on the link to enter online:
<http://romanceaustralia.com/contests-overview/sweet-treats-anthology/>
- Queries:** Paquita Fadden, Contest Coordinator: sweettreats@romanceaustralia.com

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENTRANTS:

Entries:

Please complete your **contest registration and payment** via the online form. No postal entries are accepted.

The form will ask you to enter your details and upload your entry file.

Each entry should comprise the following:

Entry: one file in .doc format (not .docx) with the story title in the filename. Include your title page, then the story, as follows:

- **Title page**, listing the story title and subgenre
- **Short story**, beginning on a new page. Maximum 3,000 words.

Maximum word count is exact. Any extra lines or words will be trimmed, so ensure your entry does not exceed 3,000 words.

Once your entry/payment is completed, you will receive an automatic acknowledgement email. If you do not receive this within 24 hours of submitting your entry, please email the contest coordinator at

sweettreats@romanceaustralia.com to check that your entry has been received. Your coordinator is a volunteer, so response times may be variable.

The coordinator will also contact you if there are any problems with your manuscript formatting.

The contest coordinator is here to help you.

There are no stupid questions.

If you are unsure of anything, contact sweettreats@romanceaustralia.com BEFORE you submit

Download a formatting sample and example scoresheet:

<https://romanceaustralia.com/contests-overview/sweet-treats-anthology/>

Formatting your manuscript:

- Page is A4 size, portrait orientation
- Include a title page containing **short story title**, and **sub-genre** (e.g. Regency, Sci-fi with romantic elements, paranormal, rural romance etc.)
- Text for short story begins on a new page, approx. one-third of the way down, and is double spaced, with no blank lines or extra spacing between paragraphs; the first line of each paragraph is indented 1cm
- Margins set to 2.5 cm all around
- All text is aligned left (not fully justified)
- All text is 12-pt Courier New or Times New Roman font
- Include a document header, containing:
 - a. Page number in upper right corner. Start page numbers at page 1 on the story (don't number your title page)
 - b. Your short story title
 - c. Sub-genre.

e.g. A Wild Romance/Regency
Sexy Space Pirates/Futuristic

This information is to enable us to properly allocate your entry to judges. **Do not include your name anywhere on the entry. Your name goes only on the entry/payment form.**

To ensure fairness to all entrants, and consistency and ease for judges, **all the above formatting conditions are compulsory.**

If any condition is not met: at the contest coordinator's discretion, the entrant will be given reasonable opportunity to fix any formatting issues and resubmit a correctly formatted entry before the closing date/time. If your entry is not received with correct formatting by that time, it will be entered in the contest, but a 5-mark deduction (total, not per error) will be made from your score, and your entry will be ranked below equivalently-scored entries that do not have formatting errors. This will disadvantage you if there is a tie for a finalist placing.

The purpose of this system is to teach entrants the proper formatting – so you're encouraged to submit your entries in advance closing date, to ensure you have time to correct any errors.

If in doubt about how to achieve any of the formatting, please ask the contest coordinator for advice. Check your entry against the formatting sample on the website and ask yourself: *does my entry look like this?* If the answer is no, then ask for help.

ENTRY CONDITIONS

RWA Inc. reserves the right not to accept entries that do not comply with the entry conditions. The contest coordinator's decision in this regard is final.

1. The Sweet Treats Short Story Award is for a romance or romantic elements short story (3,000 words maximum) that uses the term 'Chocolate' as an integral part of the story and must be on the 'sweet' side – no sexually explicit scenes are to be included (for clarification of heat level refer 6(a) below). Stories that are commercially available or contracted for publication are not eligible for entry. For the purposes of this contest, RWA deems 'commercially available' to mean: any work of fiction (*or part of*) that is (*or has been at any time*) available for purchase or download in any format for any price including free:
 - a. in any marketplace where books are available (*this shall include physical or digital bookstores, a publisher's website or store, and any other retailer or distribution outlet for books in any format*);
 - b. at any other venue where the work includes (*or is followed by*) links to non-free content, or otherwise appears with the intent of selling or encouraging purchase of any of the author's works (*this shall include story-sharing or file-sharing sites, blogs, social media sites and other author websites.*)
2. All RWA members (Aspiring, Emerging or Established categories) are eligible to enter.
3. All entrants must be financial members of RWA. If membership lapses at any time during the judging process, the entry will be removed from the contest.
4. Members are not allowed to judge for contests they have entered. Contest Coordinators may not enter or judge a contest they are managing, but may enter or judge for another contest.
5. If, after entering a story in the Sweet Treats, the entrant makes that story commercially available (or accepts a contract for its publication) during the judging period (from submission of entry to the public announcement of place-getters), the entry is no longer eligible to go forward in the contest, or to be included in the anthology, and the entrant must contact the contest coordinator to arrange for the entry to be withdrawn.
6. The definition of 'romance' implies the romantic development of a relationship between the protagonists, and includes all romantic novel and novella markets and sub-genres, i.e. contemporary (includes rural/outback), fantasy (includes magical; time-travel), historical, inspirational, LGBTQI, new adult, paranormal, regency, romantic comedy (includes chick lit), romantic suspense, science fiction (includes futuristic), young adult. Judges will judge your entry based on the information you give, so **contact the contest coordinator in advance if you are unsure of the correct sub-genre.**
 - a. **Clarification of Medium Heat Level (No Sexually Explicit Scenes):**

Sizzle and sensual usually with focus on feelings, emotions and tension/attraction rather than body parts. References to intimacy are okay, but nothing graphic. Descriptions of physical intimacy will happen "behind closed doors". There's still plenty of sexy, still plenty of heart.
7. The entrant must be the original author of every entry they submit. Entries by joint authors are permitted. Fan-fiction (stories using characters, settings, worlds or other elements that belong to someone else) is not eligible. Entries must be text only, no images.
8. RWA reserves the right, at any time during the contest, to reject entries that in the contest coordinator's opinion contain any of the following presented in a positive light or as titillation: rape, pedophilia, incest, or any other conduct that is degrading or promotes hate.
9. Up to two (2) entries per person are permitted. Copyright in the manuscript remains with the entrant.
10. Entry fees are non-refundable once your entry is accepted. Credit card payment only, via the online system. No cash or cheques.
11. Judges' decisions and scores are final. No correspondence will be entered into. If you have suggestions on the contest process, advise the coordinator by separate email.
12. Ties for finalist placings and placings in the anthology are resolved by highest total X-factor score. A minimum of 85% must be gained by any entry to win a 1st, 2nd or 3rd placing or to secure a place in the anthology.
13. Thank you notes to judges are welcome. Please email any thank yous to the contest coordinator, including the judge numbers, and they will be forwarded. No gifts, please.
14. **Prizes:** the first 3 place-getters will receive a certificate. The top-scoring 12 to 14 stories (depending on word count) will also be invited to participate in the 2021 Sweet Treats Chocolate anthology (see below).
15. If by the promulgated closing date, the contest has received fewer than ten (10) eligible entries, the contest coordinator may elect to: a) extend the closing date; and/or b) declare the contest void and refund all entry fees received. If the contest is declared void, no judging will be conducted, and no placings or prizes will be awarded.

ENTRY AND FORMATTING

16. Online entries only (no snail mail). Fill in your entry form and pay your entry fee online. You will then email your entry files to the contest coordinator. If you have two entries, attach both to the same email.

17. Your **entry** includes a short story up to but not exceeding 3,000 words (maximum) that uses the term ‘Chocolate’ as an integral part of the story with a romance or romantic elements at its core. It must be saved in .doc format (not .docx). Word count is exact and any words exceeding the limit will be trimmed. Entries can be shorter than this count, but bear in mind that judges are looking for character and plot development (see sample scoresheet on the website for details).
18. The **title page must include**: story title and sub-genre. The **header must include**: story title, sub-genre and page number, starting at page 1 on the story (don't number the title page). **Author's name must not appear on entries**. RWA contests strive to preserve anonymity between judges and entrants.
19. **Formatting**: A4 page, portrait orientation. Font: 12 pt Courier New or Times New Roman. 2.5 cm margins all round. Text begins approx. one-third of the way down the page, is aligned left (not fully justified), and is double spaced, with no blank lines or extra spacing between paragraphs, and the first line of each paragraph is indented 1cm. Remember, this is a digital contest, and entries will not be printed. Formatting will be assessed on having your margins, indents etc. set to the specified sizes, not by the appearance of your manuscript on a printed page.
20. To ensure fairness to all entrants, and consistency and ease for judges, **all the above formatting conditions are compulsory**. If any condition is not met, and time allows, you will be given the opportunity to fix the problem and submit a correctly formatted entry before the closing date/time. If your entry is not received with correct formatting by that time, it will be entered in the contest, but a 5-mark deduction (total, not per error) will be made from your raw score, and your entry will be ranked below equivalently-scored entries that do not have formatting errors. The purpose of this system is to teach entrants the proper formatting, so you are encouraged to submit your entries well in advance of the closing date, to ensure you have time to correct any errors.

ABOUT THE SWEET TREATS ANTHOLOGY

21. The top-scoring 12 to 14 stories (depending on word count) will be invited to participate in the 2021 Sweet Treats Chocolate anthology. This is optional, and is in addition to certificates for the first 3 place-getters.
22. The 2021 anthology will be published by RWA in digital and print, to be released in time for the RWA Conference 2021. Stories will be edited by RWA's experienced Sweet Treats editing team, and high-quality cover art will be sourced from a professional artist.
23. Authors will license to RWA the right for a limited period (exclusive for 1 year from date of publication and non-exclusive thereafter) to publish worldwide in digital and print as part of the anthology. Copyright will remain with the author.
24. Stories will be donated. The anthology will be not-for-profit, and any proceeds will be used to recover production expenses and/or to fund RWA programs and services. RWA reserves the right not to produce the anthology in the event that the number of eligible stories is not sufficient to make the publication viable (see conditions 12 and 15).

Tips from the contest coordinators:

- A sample scoresheet is available from the contest website: <http://romanceaustralia.com/contests-overview/sweet-treats-anthology/>. Check it out to see what the judges will be looking for—perhaps there are some improvements you can make before entering.
- Run a spell-checker over your entry—but then ask a friend to read it, too, to check for any typos or errors you've missed. There are 15 easy marks available for spelling, grammar and punctuation, so make sure you get them all.

Tips on formatting your entry:

- Download the formatting sample form the contest website to see what your entry should look like, and for more hints: <http://romanceaustralia.com/contests-overview/sweet-treats-anthology/>
- Make sure your story doesn't exceed 3,000 words. We use exact computer count. To ensure fairness to all entrants, we can't accept even one word over.
- To make the page numbers start at 1 on the manuscript, and not on your title page: have the page numbers start at zero, and then untick 'Show number on first page'.
- Finally: *please* don't spend hours stressing over the formatting. The rules are simple and easy to achieve—if in doubt, ask for help.