



The Flourless Chocolate Tart

Here's David Mincey's recipe for a classic pastry-chef dessert. "Just a big intense hit of great chocolate flavour and the kind of dessert where the quality of your chocolate really matters," says Mincey.

½ lb high-grade pure chocolate
½ lb butter
3 large eggs
½ cup icing sugar

Finely chop chocolate and place in a large bowl. Heat butter until melted and bubbling then pour over chocolate. Stir until fully blended and allow to cool to room temperature. Whisk eggs well and add icing sugar. Fold into cooled chocolate. Pour into baking dish or spring-form pan lined with plastic wrap. Ensure batter is no more than 1 inch deep. Use a bigger pan if necessary. Bake at 300°F for approximately 20 minutes or until set. Cool fully and serve. It keeps well at room temperature for 3 or 4 days.

Chef David Mincey is passionate about chocolate and has made it his mission to pass his knowledge and experience on to others.



David Mincey's Chocolate Project at Cook Culture

SIMON DESROCHERS

ISLAND CHOCOLATE SHOPS

Chocolate

An Island spin on an international obsession

One of the world's greatest passions, chocolate is a language spoken everywhere, crossing borders and cultures with its dark, rich, luscious flavour. Here in Victoria, with all our chocolate shops and the delectable chocolate creations on menus, we are no exception to this international obsession. In fact, a local chef and chocolate expert has put Victoria on the chocolate map with North America's largest collection of artisanal chocolate.

THE REALLY GOOD STUFF

Chef David Mincey, founder of the very highly regarded Camille's Restaurant, likes to know where his ingredients come from: who raises his meat, catches his fish, and grows his vegetables, even imported products like olive oil and coffee.

But when it came to chocolate, no one could tell him anything except "some big factory in Europe."

"That just drove me crazy as a chef," he says. "So I started researching it, and

I found out, first off, that I didn't know that much about chocolate, and the more I researched it, I realized no one really knows anything about chocolate."

That was more than 20 years ago. Since then, Mincey not only learned everything there is to know about chocolate, but he also teaches others about it.

"It became my goal to teach people the truth about chocolate and introduce them to real chocolate, as opposed to commercial chocolate, which are two very different things."

Chocolat, Chocolatière de Victoria makes handcrafted, small-batch treasures using unique flavours such as saffron, matcha, wasabi, lychee, and lavender. chocolatvictoria.ca

Chocolaterie Bernard Callebaut has a Victoria location (621 Broughton) that offers up the classic milk, white, and dark chocolate creations in their signature copper boxes.

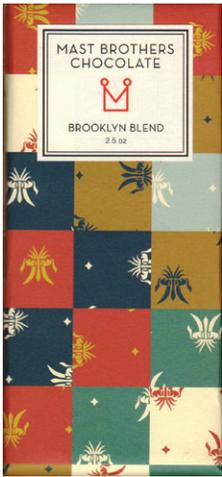
Rogers' Chocolates is the creator of delights such as Victoria cremes and squares. A visit to the original Government Street shop (yup, same location since 1885) is like a step back in time. rogerschocolates.com

Organic Fair in Cobble Hill takes organic, fair-trade chocolate and crafts exquisite bars, like the Corazon, a 70 per cent dark bar with honey and rose essence. Order online. organicfair.com

Chocolate Tofino is a tiny shop with a big reputation for handmade chocolates, like Salt Spring Island lavender truffles and Clayoquot blackberry buttercreams. chocolatetofino.com

Cumberland's **Dark Side Chocolates** makes dazzling handmade chocolates using organic, single-origin beans from Central and South America. darksidetchocolates.com

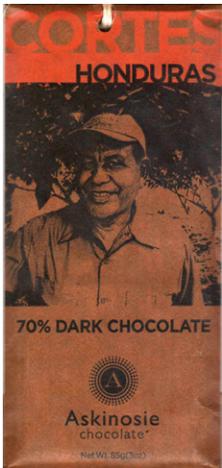
Denman Island Chocolate offers organic, fair-trade chocolate bars flavoured with candied ginger, dried raspberries, natural mint, and orange and rosemary essences. Go to Denman on a Saturday to see their factory or watch for products in shops all over the Island. denmanislandchocolate.com



Mast Brothers
Brooklyn Blend, 73%



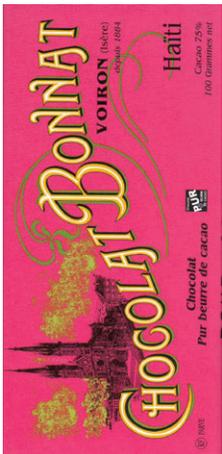
Zotter
Bolivia, 90%



Askinosie
Cortes Plantation,
Honduras, 70%



Grenada Chocolate Company
Grenada, 71%



Bonnat
Haiti



Fearless
Dark as Midnight, 75%

(All chocolate available at Victoria's Cook Culture.)

THE DIFFERENCE

Commercial chocolate is the chocolate we are most familiar with and it mostly comes from “four ginormous factories in Europe.”

“Everyone who works with chocolate buys a great big block of it from them, adds their own flavourings and does whatever they want with it, and sells it as their chocolate,” Mincey says. “And it is very, very homogenous. All the beans in it primarily come from West Africa, and that is a region of the world noted for making very bland, very homogenous-tasting chocolate.”

“Real chocolate,” says Mincey, comes from “small little plantations in the rest of the cacao-producing world: South America, Central America, Madagascar, Indonesia,” adding that the chocolate produced in these other countries is very distinct “... like the flavours of a single-vineyard wine.”

Other negatives associated with West Africa chocolate include slave labour and ecological impact. “They are basically destroying the rainforest,” he says.

Moreover, many of the people who are farming the cacao beans in West Africa have never tasted chocolate.

“People who grow rice, eat rice. People who grow wheat, eat wheat. If you grow potatoes, you probably eat potatoes,” says Mincey. “But this crop is grown by people who never touch the stuff. It is taken somewhere else and made into this luxury product that the rest of the world laps up.”

And that is where the artisanal — bean-to-bar — producers come in: they are trying to bridge the gap between the crop as it is farmed and the end product.

So who are these people?

“They are small-scale operators who work with growers in a plantation and they introduce them to chocolate, bring the bars down, and say, ‘Here’s what I made from your beans, here’s how it could be better, here are the things you need to do, and I’ll pay you top dollar if you do all these things,’” says Mincey.

A popular example is Mast Brothers from Brooklyn, who make chocolate that is “handcrafted to the nth degree.”

Dandelion is another. “Three young kids from San Francisco who make some of the best chocolate in the world right now. It’s just insanely good,” he says.

“It is very hard to do this bean-to-bar chocolate,” he says. “There are less than 100 people in the world who do it, but these people have figured it out.”

From Ulla: chocolate cake, aerated chocolate, rice crispy crunch, dulce de leche cream, and chocolate “soil”



ANTHONY METZ

CHOCOLATE ON THE MENU

Ulla in Victoria has a raved-about chocolate cake with hazelnut rice crisp and caramel ice cream that is divine. ulla.ca

The Marina Restaurant in Victoria features a flourless dark chocolate torte served warm with cafe latte gelato and an amaretto biscuit. marinarestaurant.com

The Mahle House Restaurant in Nanaimo offers a light but decadent Harlequin Mousse: layers of white and dark Belgian chocolate. mahlehouse.ca

In Courtenay, dive into beautiful Belgian chocolate cheesecake with a chocolate almond crust and chocolate ganache at **Atlas Restaurant**. atlascafe.ca

At **Long Beach Lodge** in Tofino, the Kai-Bomb Cheesecake is pure chocolate heaven and made in-house by the pastry chef who named the dessert after his son. longbeachlodgeresort.com

(Menus items are subject to change as chefs dictate.)

FROM PASSION TO PROJECT

When he first started teaching people about chocolate, Mincey used bars from his private collection. People were impressed and wanted to buy the bars themselves. All he could suggest was that they go to Paris or New York or wherever the producer was based, which was frustrating for Mincey and the class participants. So the Chocolate Project was born and Mincey became an importer, determined not just to bring in great chocolate, but also to bring to Victoria “... every single artisanal chocolate producer in the planet. Everyone. It has been about 20 years that I have been working on this, but yes, they are here now.”

“Here” is Cook Culture, where the Chocolate Project is located, each bar

TASTING NOTES

Instead of gobbling down that \$14 dollar, artisanal bar, Mincey recommends tasting it properly to really appreciate it.

First, take small piece of chocolate — chew it up a little bit if you want, but not necessarily — and use your tongue to press it up against the roof of your mouth and let your body heat naturally melt the chocolate. It might take two to five minutes, which, incidentally, is one way to determine the quality of chocolate: poor quality chocolate melts fast because there is not a lot of chocolate in it.

As it melts, notice the cascade of flavours. “There is so much good stuff packed into high-quality chocolate that you really do have to take your time.” And some of that good stuff doesn’t happen until the two- or three-minute mark.

If you think this seems a little like wine tasting, you are right. Even the vocabulary is similar. “Chocolate has a finish. Chocolate has a texture. Chocolate has all these aromatic components, and all these flavour components: it tastes like wine, and berries, and port, and smoke and tropical fruit — all these you should find in straight-up, good-quality chocolate.”

As far as pairing goes Mincey says, “A lot of people like to serve chocolate with red wine; personally, I find it is always a dreadful match. Port is better, single malt scotch is even better, but a cup of good coffee or tea is probably your best safest bet because the flavours are so complex that you don’t want anything else on your palate to mess with that and everything messes with that.”

presented for sale with tasting notes and details on origin and producers.

CHOCOLATE FUTURE

Artisanal chocolate is very new. “Twenty, 25 years ago, there was almost no artisanal chocolate in the world,” says Mincey. “We are seeing [chocolate] where coffee was 20 years ago.”

He is referring to a time when you just ordered a “coffee.” No one asked where the beans came from and no one expected to pay more than a dollar for a cup, which is the primary reason most chefs aren’t yet using real chocolate. Mincey says many chefs “would love to get off the commercial chocolate train... but it is very expensive as a product. Eating a bar is one thing, but having enough to make a couple chocolate cakes out of it — that’s a serious investment.”

Obviously, things have changed in the coffee world in a big way and Mincey predicts chocolate will be the same.

“Chocolate is going to be [where coffee is] 20 years from now,” he says. “It is getting there. And you are seeing it here in its infancy. It’s an exciting time.”

For more info on classes and chocolate tasting sessions, go to cookculture.ca. ©

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