



The Skinny on Chocolate

Chocolate – you know you love it. You know different chocolates taste differently but we bet you don't know why, or what to look for when buying, giving and eating chocolate in all its various states. Here's a little chocolate tutorial and results of which will thoroughly enrich your lives...we know that sounds grandiose but hey, this is Chocolate we're talking about here!

The History

We could start in the beginning, 2000 B.C. with the Olmecs and the Mayans and then the Aztecs, Montezuma and Cortez. But let's jump ahead a bit to the Spanish Monks who brought chocolate back to Europe from the New World and popularized it as a warm spiced drink. Before long lots of people of different cultures were introduced to chocolate, and immediately began innovating the production and uses. (We're particularly fond of Jules Sechaud of Switzerland who introduced the idea of filling chocolates). Not long ago, 70% of the chocolate purchased by Americans was Milk Chocolate but our horizons have expanded and now we lust after all kinds of chocolates.

Sometimes we trivialize what we enjoy as guilty pleasures and perhaps this is why it has taken so long for Chocolate to get the kind of serious attention that it deserves. Here at Katzinger's we have learned that Chocolate is not just candy.

Buying Chocolate

First of all, you need to decide what you personally like—there is no one best chocolate. Taste and see.

Look: Properly stored chocolate should have a smooth glossy outside with little to no variations in color inside or out.

Smell: It should be buttery, and sweet. Perhaps you'll smell a little vanilla or nuts but it should definitely be non-offensive. Good chocolate should not have any off, musty or chemical odors

Mouthfeel: Chocolate is the only food that melts at body temperature. Chocolate should melt in your mouth smooth and even—it should not have a grainy texture or a greasy, or waxy feel.

Taste: this is probably the most vague criteria because there are no wrong answers.

SNAP!—Like legs on wine, the snap is an indicator of your chocolate's balance. When you break the chocolate with your hands it will "snap". The snap should be a clear sound and leave a clean break. If the chocolate splinters when you break it, its too dry. If it resists, its too waxy.

Buying Chocolate (continued)

Read your label: Most stores (not like Katzinger's) will not let you taste their chocolates before you buy them so how do you know if you want to buy it? The label can tell you a lot.

First, check the cocoa content. This should be clearly listed as a percentage. High Quality Milk chocolates will usually contain anywhere from 20% to 50% cocoa. The more cocoa, the bolder the chocolate.

Semi-Sweet Chocolate contains from 60% to 70% Cocoa.

Bittersweet Chocolate contains 70% Cocoa and above.

High quality Dark chocolate should contain nothing more than Cocoa (also called cocoa mass or chocolate liquor), sugar, cocoa butter, lecithin, and vanilla, in that order.

Milk Chocolate will also contain powdered milk solids of some sort.

Avoid Vanillin (a cheap substitute for the real thing), added fats (i.e. Coconut oil, vegetable oil...) and preservatives.

Terrior- this is a chocolate made from beans of specific area (a plantation, country or region) several different types of beans may still be used. Cluizel specializes in some excellent Terrior bars.

A Varietal chocolate bar is made exclusively from a specified cocoa bean

What is white chocolate?

Created initially as more of a decoration or novelty, white chocolate has gained a great deal of popularity. White chocolate must contain a minimum of 20 percent cocoa butter but no actual chocolate liquor, white chocolate is ivory colored instead of brown. It also contains 14 percent milk solids and a maximum of 55 percent sugar. Some white chocolate (actually called "white confectionary coating") is not a chocolate, but contains vegetable fat in place of the cocoa butter and tends to have very little flavor. A good rule of thumb is to try to avoid any chocolate that doesn't contain the word "cocoa" on the ingredients.

Here Are Three of Our Favorite Chocolates

Michel Cluizel—Sold in only a handful of select specialty foods and candy stores in the US, Michel Cluizel is one of the most sought after chocolates we carry. Michel Cluizel has been making chocolate in southern Normandy since 1947 and are known for being the only family-owned chocolate company in France that still makes its own chocolate couverture. Using different beans from their own farms in Venezuela, Ghana, Sumatra the Ivory coast and Java, Michel Cluizel produces one of the most world renowned and absolutely delicious chocolates.

Venchi- Established in 1878 in the Piedmont region of Italy, Venchi is one of the most well known and well respected chocolate companies in the world. The flavor of their pure chocolate bars can only be described a clean and unadulterated. The snap is crisp and well defined. Venchi is an intensely satisfying chocolate.

Vosge – Probably the most well known exotic chocolate in the United States, Vosage owner Katrina Markoff pioneered chocolate on it's creative march across the senses. Katrina graduated from Le Corden Bleu in Paris, then studied and taught virtually all over the world. With her knowledge and love of native cultures and cuisines she has granted us all with exquisite examples of marrying flavors. Vosage, located in Chicago, produces more than 15 different flavors of chocolate from the relatively mundane yet surprisingly delicious Bacon bar to the unusual Indonesian Woolomoolo bar and everything in between. Katzinger's carries most of the flavors and we encourage you to try them all.