

## WHAT'S NEW

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### Chocolate overload

It's hard to imagine an office where a request to taste chocolates elicits groans.

Though Food & Wine staff members are as passionate about chocolate as anyone, in the weeks before Valentine's Day we receive so many chocolate pitches that it verges on the disgusting. Though we wrote about a boom in Bay Area chocolate confectioners in the fall ("[For the Love of Chocolate](#)," Sept. 6, 2006) we also recently tasted our way through more interesting new chocolates, especially local ones, that were worth noting.

A few trends emerged:

- New Bay Area companies continue to produce artistic, decadent confections, including lots of booze-enhanced flavors.
- Chocolate is getting even darker.
- Many companies use heart-healthy claims or fair trade labels to offset chocolate-buyer's remorse.

All of the following chocolatiers list retail locations on their Web sites, and most sell online.

At Oakland's Cosmic Chocolate, the hand-made confections are air-brushed in metallic hues and include flavors inspired by cocktails, as well as heart-shaped ones. Four- to eight-piece boxes, \$8-\$16; [www.cosmicchocolateshop.com](http://www.cosmicchocolateshop.com).

San Francisco's Coco Delice also dabbles in alcoholic flavors, such as a dark chocolate ganache filled with Sonoma port or with Kahlua and coffee. Six- to 24-piece boxes are \$10.50-\$35.95; [www.cocodelice.com](http://www.cocodelice.com).

San Anselmo's New Tree Chocolate produces its bars in Belgium, with flashy names like Sexy (with ginger) and Blush (with cherry) -- and these are just the ones that go into the Valentine's Day package (\$8.50-\$8.95). You can ask for Forgiveness (with "harmonizing" cactus extract) later. [www.newtree.com](http://www.newtree.com).

Alter Eco, an international company with its U.S. headquarters in San Francisco, offers bars made in Switzerland with fair trade chocolate. We especially liked Milk Cajou, from Ghana (\$4.29 per 3.5-ounce bar); [altereco-usa.com](http://altereco-usa.com).