



# New York Chocolate Show Brings Sweetness to the City

by The Experimental Gourmand



Every year, one of the most anticipated food events to land in the Big Apple is the [New York Chocolate Show](#) . I know people who have the dates starred on their calendars the minute the days are announced so they can prepare for it. That's probably not a bad idea, as this is a display of such wonders that it looks like Oompa Loompas snuck away from Willie Wonka for a few days to have some fun in the big city.



## Broadway in Chocolate

The beauty and versatility of chocolate comes alive in the annual fashion show and the gorgeous creations that are created using this medium. This year, the theme was "Broadway," with fantastic replicas of various plays' costumes on display. The folks at [Valrhona](#), also an exhibitor at the show, contributed the confections that went into making a model of the theatre district, which was put together by students at the [International Culinary Center](#) .



## E. Guittard Chocolate Bars



### Michel Cluizel Chocolate Bars

But the real draw of the show itself is getting to sample different varieties of chocolate. The heavy-hitters in the industry were there, including the aforementioned **Valrhona**, **E. Guittard**, and **Michel Cluizel**. Local pastry superstars **Francois Payard** and **Jacques Torres** had displays filled with truffles and treats, each one more enticing than the other.

Cocoa confections were present in every shape and size. Several producers had single-origin chocolate bars, with bean-to-bar direct trade companies displaying photos of the farmers from whom they purchase the raw ingredients. Cocoa nibs were abundant as well, whether on their own or folded into other creations. Lavishly-decorated, candy-covered pretzels as gift items were at a few tables and molten chocolate fountains flowed on a couple of others, making my mouth water as I took in the aroma of sweetness in the air. Even after quite a few samples with a fair amount of sugar, caffeine, and cocoa coursing through my veins, I was able to uncover some real standouts at the show.



### FIKA Seven Deadly Sins

I met Håkan Mårtensson, the master chocolatier at **FIKA** Espresso Bar, at last year's event and was completely blown away by the beauty and unique flavors of his work. One favorite of mine is his Sea Salt Caramel chocolate. Breaking through the thin exterior shell, the smooth, buttery caramel poured lovingly over my tongue like a creamy, silken blanket with a little bite from the salt. He has put together collections of his creations in combinations like the "Four Elements" and the "Seven Deadly Sins" as well as a "Daily Dose of Chocolate" vial. There are three locations for **FIKA** in the city to have a bite to eat, a cup of coffee, and, of course, some chocolate.

Washington, DC's **Co Co. Sala** has been a big hit on the local dining scene, winning several awards. Their entire menu has a chocolate theme with molé and chocolate-chipotle appearing in a few dishes. At their boutique, they sell the items they had on display at the show, including their chocolate-covered bacon, which sold out at last year's event. The creamy white chocolate squares with tart, dried strawberries has an added surprise of Pop Rocks to wake up the flavor sensors in your mouth. One of my favorites is the smooth cocoa butter texture and of spices of their white chocolate bar with pink peppercorn and sea salt that makes a delicious, if unusual, sweet and savory match.



### Roni-Sue Beer Crunch



### Roni-Sue Savory-Sweet Collection

**Roni-Sue Chocolates** has been a mainstay at **Essex Street Market** on the Lower East Side. Her Bacon Candy, dark chocolate enrobed in smoky bacon, is a local favorite. I sampled her salty-sweet Beer Candy made with buttercrunch using **Brooklyn Brewery** syrup, dipped in chocolate and covered in pretzels and beer nuts. This is a perfect snack for any occasion. She also had a few of her savory and sweet truffles on display as well.



### Liddabit Sweets

Popcorn with honeycomb crunch and chocolate, sea salt chocolate caramels, hand-made candy bars using local ingredients. You've just stepped into the world of **Liddabit Sweets**, another New York City-based company. Jen and Liz, the owners, sell their carefully crafted and deliciously habit-forming products, many of which I've eaten several times, at a number of markets around town and on line.



### Xocolatti Plates



### Xocolatti Truffles

**Xocolatti** just opened up shop on Spring Street in Soho about six weeks ago. Last year, when they were still just a mail-order company, I was taken with how beautiful their truffles appeared to the eye. They still have those and have expanded their range to include items like their fragrant, chai-spiced Masala Milk slate and their floral, fruity Pomogranate Woodbury Cluster. More of these items in additional flavors are available at their store, which makes a good excuse to head downtown to explore their products.



### Two Chicks Wine Chocolates

For those who like to have wine with their chocolate, there were two



companies who pulled those together, each with a different twist. **Two Chicks with Chocolate** has a **Wine Collection** with truffles infused with various vintages. I tried their Spicy Merlot with heat from cinnamon and black peppercorn and a wine-tinged finish.



### Chocolate Shop Wines

**Chocolate Shop** takes the combination in a different direction. Wines are infused with chocolate in a variety of ways creating a beverage with a distinct flavor profile. I sipped the Chocolate Red Wine, which was described to me as being like “a big Tootsie Roll.” Inhaling the fragrance was wonderful with big berry wine notes and a nice layer of cocoa on top of that. Remember what it tasted like to get almost to the center of a cherry Tootsie Pop when you bit through the candy shell to reach the chocolaty center? Drinking this kind of reminded me of that.



### Maha Chocolate Display

Taking recipes from her pediatrician mother and tweaking them, Maha Alami launched her chocolate line in California and has now, fortunately for us, brought it to New York. **Maha Chocolates** features clusters of meaty toasted hazelnuts or roasted almonds with soothing lavender or spicy ginger, each drenched in rich, dark chocolate. These were the perfectly-composed snack bites to keep me going in search of other delicious treats.



### Salt of the Earth Cookies

I stumbled upon **Salt of the Earth Bakery** at almost the opposite end of the exhibit hall from Maha. Tasting these products left me, well, speechless. By pairing various types of salts with their sweets, they elevate the flavors to some level of amazing that I've only ever rarely encountered. Maldon sea salt enhances the buttery dough and semi-sweet discs making chocolate chip cookies more than just a snacktime treat and worthy of a dessert course all their own. The Kona brownie pulls together Italian espresso and salt from a coffee-growing region to create a sweet, earthy harmony. All of the samples I

tried from them were fantastic, and I might have to pay a few extra trips to the gym just to be able to treat myself to them on a regular basis.



### American Heritage Chocolates

Before I left the show, I paid a visit to another table that has a product with roots that go further back in our history. **American Heritage Chocolate** was created by the historic division of confectionary giant **Mars, Inc.** Inspired by



early American records of chocolate drunk as a beverage rather than eaten in candy form, the company developed a recipe based upon one from the 1700s for a drinkable chocolate that features flavors like anise, vanilla, orange, cinnamon, and red pepper. This smooth, creamy concoction with its spice notes was a refreshing change from the usual hot cocoa. Packets of this

product are available at historical sites and museums across the United States, and the profits from the sales go back into the sites themselves, not to Mars.

With a fashion runway, cooking demos, educational displays about where the raw materials come from, and examples of how the beans are processed, this event is about more than just candy. **The New York Chocolate Show** aims to cover the whole experience of chocolate. Of course, eating it is really what everyone goes there for, and it was nice to see the folks whose products I enjoyed last year as well as to meet new vendors and see what great ideas and delicious treats they brought with them to display. I can hardly wait for next year's show to see what else there is to discover in the land of chocolate. Fortunately, I already have my 2012 calendar to begin marking the days until it returns.

*The Experimental Gourmand* is the story of a blogger, food writer, and experimental home cook. She enjoys exploring the local food event scene and finding fresh ingredients at her farmers markets with which to make great meals.