



Connoisseurs talk about genetics, terroir, aroma and the flavour profile. Tasting notes focus on the five senses

To ensure the quality of its fair trade, organic, kosher, single origin chocolate, it works directly with bean growers and produces chocolate for professionals and consumers. Having tasted the full range, a standout was the “fruity”, a 68 per cent cacao offering.

It has a full-bodied taste with berry hints and strong notes of cherry with a lingering finish. But there is no fruit in the chocolate, and there are no nuts in the “nutty” bar, either. The tastes come from the cacao bean itself. Until recently only available for sale in the America Club and the Hong Kong Cricket Club, it’s soon to be stocked in high-end supermarkets and delis.

#### Amedei

Long a favourite of pastry chefs globally, family owned Italian chocolate company Amedei stocks its award-winning chocolate bars in places such as City’s super. Many of the bars are made from single origin and single varietal beans. The 9 bar is a combination of cacao from nine plantations that the company says have “been discovered, restored and rendered productive again”.

For a 75 per cent cacao hit, it has a surprisingly smooth taste, with initial bitterness leading to a creamy, almost nutty, flavour and a lingering finish. It was a 2011 gold winner in the bean to bar best dark chocolate category, awarded by the Academy of Chocolate, a British organisation.

#### Pain au Chocolat – Le Salon De Thé de Joël Robuchon

An aroma of butter and chocolate entices, and the flaky pastry is so light and airy that the layers of buttery goodness can almost be peeled away. Unlike some, this pain au chocolat does not feel or taste greasy. The sweet Valhrona chocolate centre is balanced by the savoury note of the pastry, so after each bite you want more. It is still delicious when eaten later in the day. Get to Le Salon, in Central’s Landmark mall, early as only about 70 are made each day.

#### Amer-Bitter Dark Chocolate Macaron – Jean-Paul Hévin

Competition in Hong Kong’s macaron market is intensifying. But not all are created equal, and there are many terrible, overly sweet versions of the French delicacy. One of the best is the signature macaron Amer-Bitter from this legendary chocolatier. These have been twice voted the best macarons in Paris and are available at three boutiques in Hong Kong.

They are elegant with a chewy bite, a firm yet creamy ganache centre and a pleasing taste. They are perfect with a cup of tea or espresso. For a double chocolate whammy, try them with Hévin’s delicious hot chocolate.

The macarons are made in France, and are displayed for one day, with a shelf life of four days.



Jean Paul Hévin makes amazing macarons. Photo: Dickson Lee

#### The Chocolate Room – The Peninsula

The Chocolate Connoisseur class held in the hotel’s Chocolate Room begins with a visual history lesson, from the Aztecs to current methods of growing, harvesting and producing chocolate.

Next comes a tasting,



A selection of The Peninsula’s handmade chocolates. Photo: Warton Li

which includes raw cacao nibs and single plantation chocolate. This gives chocolate enthusiasts a chance to understand more about the subtle nuances and differences in taste that result from the bean’s different places of origin. Then comes a sampling of some of the outstanding artisanal chocolates that are served in the hotel’s restaurants.

Finally, there is a pairing of chocolates with a sparkling wine and cognac. From mid-September the handmade chocolate range, which has 20 flavours, from classic truffle to apple pie, will be available paired with cognacs and whiskies in the hotel’s new bar.

From November, these will be available from the boutique, as will the cookbook, *Naturally Peninsula – Chocolate Flavours*.

#### Chocolate Afternoon Tea – The Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong

The Chocolate Afternoon Tea, using Valhrona chocolate, enables fans to satiate the need for chocolate in a variety of forms. The cakes and pastries are changed regularly, and this month the focus is the Chocolate Contrasts afternoon tea.

Not only does the selection include contrasts in chocolate – dark and white, thereby presenting contrasts in tastes – but also contrasts in flavour and textures within each item.

For example, the Ivory Strawberry Tart, one of the seven sweet treats, has a dark chocolate exterior with a crunch that immediately gives way to a deep red soft centre of strawberry.

The acidity from the fruit contrasts with the sweetness of the chocolate itself.

Pairing options include a selection of dessert wines or whiskies, in addition to tea, coffee, and the hotel’s hot chocolate, which contains three different percentage chocolates.

#### Rosenana – Thomas Trillion

Thomas Trillion is a patisserie near Tin Hau owned and operated by Thomas Lui. He is known for his technically difficult and creative chocolates, cakes and pastries, for which he has won many awards. One of the most visually stunning and popular cakes is the Rosenana.

It is a dark chocolate sphere with holes in the top, revealing a sponge cake centre that is topped with a combination of ingredients such as Greek yoghurt cream, raspberry cream, fruit compote, and chocolate mousse. The tops are painted in vivid colours that give the product the appearance of a decorative object. They look almost too good to eat ... almost.



Thomas Lui and his Rosenanas. Photo: May Tse

#### Autumn Chocolate Truffles – Mandarin Oriental Cake Shop

Looking much like their namesake, these fantastic chocolates, which contain real truffle, have a rough, textured appearance and a rich, intense, creamy chocolate flavour. Their taste packs the punch of a heavyweight boxer, but they are as light as a feather. The moment you finish one you want another.

Containing a mixture of cream, Oreo cookies, fresh black truffle and Araguani Grand Cru du Terroire 72 per cent dark chocolate, they will be available from mid-September. They are the latest creation of the talented Yves Matthey, the hotel’s executive pastry chef. foodandwine@scmp.com



Mandarin Oriental chocolate truffles