

Choc therapy

Chocolatiers throughout the country are raising the bar on chocolate-making to a dark art form. Here's a round-up of our favourite places to shop for the ultimate choc hits.

Bean-to-bar. Single origin. White, dark or milk. Truffles, freckles, blocks and brownies. Tempered, buffed and ready to roll. Bunnies, eggs, baubles and bonbons. You want fine chocolate, and these dedicated professionals are here to give it to you. Take no prisoners.

NEW SOUTH WALES

KAKAWA

Kakawa chocolatier and pastry chef Jin Sun Kim worked under Swiss-trained master chocolatier Keith Hurdman at Melt in London's Notting Hill. Together with her partner, David Ralph, Kim has brought some of Notting Hill's white-painted English charm to her two Sydney shops. The Darlinghurst site is where everything is handmade; Kim and her three chefs can be seen making (then serving) truffles, say, so as you satisfy your cacao craving you can quizz them on what's in the rocky road (a dark house-blend of Valrhona, São Tomé and Caribbean single-origin chocolate with cherry brandy and cherry purée) or the individually wrapped chocolate cigars (salted hazelnut praline with rice bubbles one day, peanut butter and strawberry the next). "In winter we tend to use more alcohol and nuts or beautiful spices infused with cream," Kim says. "In summer it's all about citrus, cherries and mangoes." Six varieties of hot chocolate, including a chilli- or brandy-spiked version, and freshly churned ice-cream sandwiches are also part of Kakawa's magic. If you're interested in DIY, the store hosts various

tutorials, from talk-and-taste nights to tempering workshops. *Kakawa, 147 William St, Darlinghurst, (02) 9331 8818; Gaffa Gallery, ground floor, 281 Clarence St, Sydney, (02) 9283 0678, kakawachocolates.com.au*

JUST WILLIAM CHOCOLATES

This beloved hole-in-the-wall was opened 32 years ago by company director Suzanne Francis and her third-generation-chocolatier husband, Rodney. "We'd always dreamed of having our own shop, and now we have adult customers who used to come in when they were children," she says. Today the chocolates stocked at Just William aren't made by the Francis family, but are sourced instead from some of the best chocolatiers in Sydney. The cornucopia of chocolate wares includes the likes of marshmallow domes and lemon myrtle-flavoured crèmes, doily-lined silver trays of dark chocolate-dipped orange peel, truffles dusted with everything from gold leaf to blueberry crumb, honeycomb-spiced bark and Turkish delight. For the purists, the likes of Champagne-filled chocolate bombs are served by a white-gloved shopkeeper. For something a bit off-piste, there's the chocolate-covered jelly snakes. "We keep them under the counter for regulars because we can't keep up with the demand." *Just William, 4 William St, Paddington, (02) 9331 5468, justwilliam.com.au*

VICTORIA

BIBELOT

Bibelot (pronounced *bib-loh*) means trinket or small curio or ornament. It would be a stretch of the imagination to call Bibelot's spacious double shopfront small, but there's certainly plenty to treasure here. With terrazzo and timber floors, and floods of natural light, it encompasses a gelateria, retail space, a lengthy glass, brass and marble display case bright with intricately crafted cakes, rainbow-hued macarons and jewel-like chocolates, a sleek café area and glassed-in chocolate kitchen. The chocolate (or bonbon) range, made in-house by two full-time chocolatiers using a mix of Valrhona, Felchlin and Cacao Barry couverture, is truly gorgeous to behold and runs to about 18 flavours at any given time, from classic caramel through to coriander, peanut butter and celery, and tonka bean and mandarin. Then there's a range of

nine chocolate bars (three white, three milk, three dark), seasonally appropriate chocolate figures and a range of various nut and chocolate combinations, such as macadamia nuts coated with dark chocolate and coconut. There's also two constantly running chocolate taps – one milk, one dark – for anybody wishing to choc-top their caramel and milk-chocolate fudge gelati. And there's a small selection of hard-to-find books about chocolate for sale, so you can read all about it too. *Bibelot, 285-287 Coventry St, South Melbourne, (03) 9690 2688, bibelot.com.au*

BURCH & PURCHASE

It's hard to avoid the Willy Wonka comparisons at Burch & Purchase. It's not just a regular shop; it's a "sweet studio". It has a theatrical open kitchen replete with a small fleet of uniformed chefs. There are "edible canvases" – large pictures of colourful gardens where all the flowers, butterflies and foliage can be plucked and eaten. The glass cases running the length of the shop are full of almost impossibly vibrantly coloured sweet stuff, set against a colour scheme that leans towards saccharine pinks, yellows and whites. There are 15 different chocolate bars, a dazzling array of ice-cream flavours, edible chocolate baubles at Christmas, chocolate kangaroos for Australia Day, cute choc-pops on sticks all year round. Strictly speaking, B&P is not just a chocolate shop (it also deals in choc-free desserts and cakes) but the quality of the chocolate and the care and skill of Darren Purchase and his team – their éclair, for example, is filled with a cream made with 67 per cent Madagascan single-origin chocolate – make the sweet studio a must for connoisseurs and fun-lovers alike. *Burch & Purchase Sweet Studio, 647 Chapel St, South Yarra, (03) 9827 7060, burchandpurchase.com*

CIOCCOLATO LOMBARDO

New Jersey native Tad Lombardo started his working life as an engineer with a side interest in chocolate-making which, after a contract to make Ben Shewry's signature salted caramel-centred pukeko eggs at Attica, has turned full-time. Lombardo started selling chocolate he made at home from a cart at the Prahran Market in 2011, then moved into a booth-sized, glassed-in stall in the centre of the Market Hall in 2013. Late last >

CHOC AND AWE

A choc-rich menu at Bibelot. Clockwise from far right: gâteaux are dispensed at Burch & Purchase; Bibelot's macarons and sweet curios; Just William and its bark bites; Murielle Vuilleumier.



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MILKY WAYS

Clockwise from far left: great things come from tiny Cioccolato Lombardo; Couverture & Co; Monsieur Truffe; Brian Edwards (left) and Ugo Cocchis of Monsieur Truffe.



QUEENSLAND

MURIELLE VUILLEUMIER SWISS CHOCOLATIER

Temperatures in inner-city Brisbane's Newstead can soar into the high 30s and beyond, with punishing humidity prevailing at any time of the year. But inside Swiss-empat chocolatier Murielle Vuilleumier's pocket-sized shop it always feels like a cool summer's day in Geneva – the space is climatically controlled to run between 18C and 20C at 55 to 65 per cent humidity, 24 hours a day. "Customers always ask how should they keep their chocolates and I tell them the ideal is 16C to 22C, so a wine fridge is great if they have one," Vuilleumier says. "I tell them to stick them next to the Champagne." It's an apt location. A glance at the tightly curated collection of 16 filled varieties of chocolate on display underlines Vuilleumier's studied approach to small-batch production. She uses only Swiss couverture, sourced from niche producer Felchlin, which is made using South American beans. Each handmade piece takes 24 to 48 hours to finish. Moulds are individually hand-washed, air-dried and buffed with a cotton-wool ball for at least 10 minutes before each use. The ultra-glossy finished products always receive white-glove handling to avoid scratches. "It's a quality thing," she says. "I don't want chocolates on my shelf if I'm not 120 per cent happy with them." *Murielle Vuilleumier Swiss Chocolatier, shop 3, 113 Commercial Rd, Teneriffe, (07) 3358 6008, muriellevuilleumier.com.*

second-hand timber-shelved, exposed-brick moves flawlessly. What's refreshing about this industrial space, though, is that it includes actual industry in the form of the working chocolate-making machinery, separated from the café and retail spaces by glass, with which owner Thibault Fregoni produces a large range of bars, flavoured chocolate, drinking chocolate and cocoa powder with his meticulous precision. Fregoni uses artisan (and often organic) couverture chocolate but also has the machinery and skills to be able to produce "bean to bar" chocolate bars in his Lygon Street factory-showroom-café. There's also an impressive range of single-origin bars using chocolate sourced from Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Madagascar, Bolivia, Ecuador and Brazil. Some of the bars are dark, others milk, but they all come with tasting notes highlighting the way each region's cacao beans express themselves. There's an undeniable hipster aesthetic in terms of the packaging (textured, rough-hewn, minimal), but there's enough authenticity, knowledge and experience at work here to make it more definitive than derivative. Just like its Bean to Bar line, Monsieur Truffe is the real thing. *Monsieur Truffe, 351 Lygon St, East Brunswick, (03) 9380 4915, monsieurtruffechocolate.com*

COUVERTURE & CO

Former journalist Jessica Brookes is now owner and chocolatier at Brisbane small-batch chocolate-maker Couverture & Co. In the cabinet at her smart shop in the city's inner west you'll find around 20 different hand-tempered, hand-dipped and hand-piped treats filled with everything from old-school standards such as peppermint cream and raspberry ganache to more experimental offerings such as an almost savoury pepper and Port mix, orange and poppy seed, or a tonka bean and white-chocolate ganache. Brookes creates about 70 chocolates each session, producing

between four and five different flavour combinations per batch in the climate-controlled kitchen. She learned the craft working for two years alongside Melissa Atkinson of Brisbane's dearly missed Bittersweet the Chocolate Boutique and uses Callebaut chocolate exclusively, praising the Belgian couverture for its gentle multipurpose charms. "It's quite versatile and the dark chocolate isn't too fruity or domineering," Brookes says. *Couverture & Co, 19A, Enoggera Tce, Red Hill, (07) 3367 3000, couvertureandco.com.au*

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

STEVEN TER HORST

Friends thought Steven ter Horst mad when he spent 2006 trying to perfect salted caramel. Since then his outstanding fleur de sel truffles have propelled the popularity of his handmade chocolates and tasting café in Adelaide's Rundle Street. Trained as a chef but deeply averse to the attitude in commercial kitchens, the genial ter Horst walked away from cooking for a decade, taking other career paths (banking, teaching English in Japan) before returning to Adelaide to specialise in chocolate. In the front room of his suburban townhouse he spent two-and-a-half years experimenting with blends and brands of Belgian couverture to find the profile and length of flavour he wanted. The centres are flavoured with authentic ingredients rather than concentrates – think Ardbeg single-malt whisky. His partner, Chantelle Giardina (who has her own Maius chocolate brand), roasts cacao beans to produce single-origin chocolate bars, and plans with ter Horst to produce the first all-Australian bar using beans from Queensland's Mossman Gorge. Ter Horst also plans to make petit gâteaux with Basket Range wine. "You've got to keep exploring ideas to keep the public interested," he explains, pointing to his Aztec spice range of chilli and spice-flavoured chocolates. *Steven ter Horst Chocolatier, 256 Rundle St, Adelaide, (08) 7226 6216, steventerhorst.com.au*

JUST BLISS

Turkish-born Gulcay Uysal started making Just Bliss chocolates by hand at her family home in the Adelaide Hills, choosing a different food direction from her parents, renowned for baking Adelaide's first loaves of pide. Now she has a production facility and handsome shop in the heart of Adelaide. Uysal's winning chocolate blends are complemented by beautiful presentation and packaging, which helped accelerate Just Bliss's success in so many retail outlets Uysal felt compelled to open her own outlet. Managed by her sister Yasemin, the elegant Gawler Place store presents its range of 16 couverture chocolates and

12 truffles beside such ever-popular confections as white chocolate and raspberry-covered nuts dusted with icing sugar. Customer inquiries have inspired an acclaimed range of sugar-free chocs (using alcohol by-product maltitol as its sweetening agent), and its superior chocolate blends feature in a popular Easter egg range. The store has also introduced a café serving a range of cakes and such Middle Eastern treats as pistachio baklava. Bliss indeed. *Just Bliss, 5/38 Gawler Pl, Adelaide, (08) 7225 4872, justbliss.com.au*

RED CACAO

Marcus Booth-Remmers worked pastry in leading Adelaide restaurants (Bridgewater Mill and Magill Estate among them) but his true passion was always working with chocolate. After five years in Europe studying chocolate-making, he returned to the Adelaide Hills and opened Red Cacao in Stirling. He considers it a European-style chocolate café, selling his own pralines, truffles and blocks made from single-origin chocolate, but also>

DARK ARTS

Clockwise from top: Couverture & Co; Steven ter Horst; a treasure trove by Murielle; Just Bliss; some of Red Cacao's range.



PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES KNOWLER (HORST, JUST BLISS, RED CACAO), AJ MOLLER (COUVERTURE, VUILLEUMIER), JESSICA REFFTEL EVANS & MARTIN REFFTEL (CIOCCOLATO LOMBARDO, MONSIEUR TRUFFE)

EAT OUT



presenting a range of chocolate experiences, from drinks to tasting plates. Unique tastes include truffles filled with Lobethal Road shiraz, and Belgian hot chocolate is a highlight, while staff like suggesting individual chocolates to match cups of single-origin coffee. "It's like introducing fine-dining ideas into a café," Booth-Remmers says. "The idea is for people to stop, sit down and really taste the chocolate. Not just eat it, but to be consumed by it." The café's Friday evening dessert bar offers a weekly menu of plated desserts, and is a big hit with locals, who like to sprawl on lawns opposite the shop and graze on the good stuff till 10 on fine evenings. *Red Cacao*, shop 3/41 Mount Barker Rd, Stirling, (08) 8339 3128, redcacao.com.au

TASMANIA

SWEET ENVY

Where to start in this fairytale pâtisserie? Alistair Wise and his cake-guru wife, Teena Kearney-Wise, have a knack such that everything in their tiny

shop demands to be eaten. Especially the chocolate. They make several fun chocolatey creations, including Mit Mats (a chocolate biscuit sandwich, filled with creamy frosting and ganache and submerged in melted chocolate) which, yes, is Alistair's cheeky ode to Tim Tams. The impossibly rich Dreaming of Chocolate Gaytime may not be quite as famous as the ice-cream it honours, but with its layers of chocolate pastry, crunchy chocolate-cornflake mix, and dark chocolate mousse encasing a raspberry compote, all coated in dark chocolate, it's so much better. Chunky Monkey is the ultimate brownie, and the chocolate salty caramel tart has a base of quite perfect chocolate shortcrust pastry. But the absolute must-try is Wise's Opéra cake. Utterly classic, its 14 layers of ganache, sponge, and butter cream make for a truly delicious, beautiful combination. 341 Elizabeth St, North Hobart, (03) 6234 8805. sweetenvy.com

THE CAT'S TONGUE

Although it's a café on weekends, with an all-day menu of tasty dishes, at heart this shop is Andy Abramowich's chocolate laboratory, where he ponders, invents and produces the best chocolates in Tasmania. He's generally willing to admit to them being the best chocolates in Huonville but he underestimates himself. Although recently, having taken delivery of a new automatic tempering machine, he's hinted that he's ripe

LA DOLCE VITA

Clockwise from top left: Sweet Envy's Alistair Wise; Sweet Envy chocolates; The Cat's Tongue's chocolates; peanut-butter-and-jelly cupcakes at Sweet Envy; Sue Lewis.

for world domination. We can recommend everything, but the coconut-based chocolate he calls KL Delight, inspired by the flavours of his Penang childhood, is a standout, as is a sesame-flavoured chocolate that somehow beautifully balances tahini and hazelnut, with some crunch from a sesame brittle garnish. Abramowich's chocolates are on sale here when the café is open but also available at West Hobart's Hill Street Grocer and other good Hobart shops. *The Cat's Tongue*, shop 3, 11-13 Wilmot Rd, Huonville, 0428 411 455. thecatstongue.com.au

WA

SUE LEWIS CHOCOLATIER

Western Australia's chocolate renaissance continues to tick along nicely, thanks to the sustained efforts of regional champions like Denmark's John Wade (Dark Side Chocolates) and Margaret River bean-to-bar chocolate makers Bahen & Co, and Gabriel. Closer to the city, Sue Lewis is one of the movement's key figures and her move to a shiny new CBD workshop is good news for Perth chocolate-fanciers. Armed with chocolate from Valrhona, Michel Cluizel and Bahen & Co, she produces a distinctive range of treats with native flavours a key leitmotif. Milk-chocolate blocks studded with sandalwood nuts are one instance of this pro-WA stance, while truffle flavours run the gamut from red gum honey to lemon-myrtle curd. *Sue Lewis Chocolatier*, State Buildings, Cnr St Georges Tce & Barrack St, Perth, 0452 423 323. suelewischocolatier.com.au ●

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS CREERAR (SWEET ENVY) & JODY D'ARCY (SUE LEWIS)



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