



## out & about

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# make mine Chocolate

| By Lyn Dobrin |

## With Valentine's <sup>Day</sup> <sub>smack</sub>

in the middle of the month, chocolate is everywhere, especially on the menus of local restaurants. How chocolate got so linked with Valentine's Day is subject to debate, but do we really care? In my book, any opportunity to eat chocolate is a celebration.

If you've ever been to one of her seven-course chocolate dinners, you know that Colette Connor, owner/chef of the Inn Spot on the Bay in Hampton Bays, is chocolate obsessed. In February, Cheffe Colette (as she likes to be known) will serve dark chocolate truffles with crystallized ginger. She says the intensity of the dark chocolate, the heat of the ginger and the sweetness of the large sugar crystals is fireworks for the mouth.

Connor is also planning a molten chocolate cake with cardamom, chilies and cinnamon, using Abuela Mexican chocolate. "The first time I had Mexican chocolate, I was stunned," she says. "It had smokiness and cinnamon. I fell in love with it."

South-of-the-border flavors are also enhancing chocolate desserts at Besito in Huntington and Roslyn, and at Wildthyme in Southampton.

Besito's executive chef, Matthew Lake (who once apprenticed with Marcel Desauliers, author of the cookbook *Death by Chocolate*), favors Ibarra Mexican chocolate for his chocolate pudding (served with whipped cream and sweet fried bread). What makes Mexican chocolate different is the way it's made, says Lake. "They use roasted cocoa and blend it with Mexican cinnamon and



So many chocolate  
*desserts*, so little time ...

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sugar, creating a coarser texture with a distinctive flavor.”

At Wildthyme, co-owner Delaney Oser favors Latin America’s dulce de leche — a caramel-like, milk-based syrup — as a filling for her dark chocolate torte with bittersweet chocolate glaze. She uses Valrhona cocoa powder and semi-sweet chocolate. “It’s like a candy bar,” she says.

If you can’t make up your mind whether you’d prefer a brownie, fudge or truffle, James Canavan, the executive pastry chef at H2O Seafood Grill in Smithtown, lets you have it all with Drowned by Chocolate. There are three levels of chocolate richness:

a thin layer of fudge, a quarter-inch-thick brownie and a whopping two-and-a-half-inch layer of orange liqueur truffle. The whole thing is coated with chocolate ganache. Canavan uses Callebaut semi-sweet chocolate for all but the brownie in which cocoa powder is the chocolate of choice. The dish is so rich, he says, that one person needs help to finish it.

Another over-the-top chocolate dessert is served at Blackstone Steak House in Melville. There you’ll find The Blackstone Layer Cake: layers of blackout cake, chocolate mousse, bittersweet ganache, praline crunch and caramel-satin filling, coated in dark chocolate.

Daniel Belanger, the pastry chef at the Garden City Hotel, brings some terrific ideas he picked up while working at Le Cirque, the Plaza Hotel and various Four Seasons restaurants. He offers a brownie with layers of Earl Grey-tea chocolate ganache and milk-chocolate mousse, served with crunchy salted caramel ice cream.

At On3 in Glen Head, chef/owner Stuart Brown takes a nursery favorite, bread pudding, and transforms

## What’s Your Choice?

Our first on-line readers’ poll asked the question: “When you want a sweet ending for a restaurant meal, which dessert are you most likely to choose?” Here’s how the tasty treats stacked up.

Crème brûlée or flan	27.6%
The richest chocolate dessert on the menu	27.6%
A slice of creamy cheesecake	18.4%
A scoop or two of ice cream	15.3%
Tart Key lime pie	10.7%

## Chocolate Bites

**In the immortal words of Lucy Van Pelt in Charles M. Schulz’s beloved *Peanuts*, “All I really need is love, but a little chocolate now and then doesn’t hurt.” With Valentine’s Day in mind, we offer these morsels of chocolate trivia.**

Chocolate is second only to flowers for Valentine’s Day gifts. According to the Chocolate Manufacturers Association (CMA), over 36 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolate are sold each year for the February holiday. That number would, no doubt, amaze Richard Cadbury, who created the first Valentine’s Day candy box in the late 1800s.

Chocolate is by far America’s favorite flavor. In a recent survey, 52 percent of respondents said they liked chocolate best. Second place was a tie between berry flavors and vanilla at 12 percent each. (CMA; [www.chocolateusa.org](http://www.chocolateusa.org))

The United States produces more chocolate than any other country but the nation that wins the title for highest chocolate consumption per capita is Switzerland.

## Did you know?

According to [www.holidayinsights.com](http://www.holidayinsights.com), women account for 75 percent of chocolate purchases made during the year. But in the run-up to February 14, the genders switch. Men are responsible for 75 percent of the whopping \$1 billion spent on chocolates for Valentine’s Day.

it into a sophisticated and satisfying Chocolate Bread Pudding. Brown adds extra bittersweet Valrhona chocolate, sugar and Frangelico to an egg and heavy cream custard. Brioche (no stale bread here!) and chocolate cake are cut into small cubes, toasted, mixed with the custard and baked in a water bath. The slice of warm pudding is served with ice cream.

On a visit to LL Dent in Carle Place, I was brought back to my childhood with their incredible red-velvet cake. This is how cake should taste! Even though red velvet is a popular Southern specialty, it found its way into my suburban New Jersey home and one bite brought me back to my mother's table. It must be the Hershey's cocoa that baker Cynthia Blue, the owner of Cynful Delights in Uniondale, uses to flavor the cakes that she prepares for LL Dent. Blue uses her grandmother's recipe. The filling is a smooth cream-cheese icing.

So many more . . . Chocolate Truffle Torte at Thyme in Roslyn, Chocolate Pizza at Formaggio in Carle Place, the Chocolate Bag at Starfish in Merrick. Just add your favorites to the list and dig in. 



## More Great Chocolate Desserts

*Be sure to visit [www.distinctionmagazine.com](http://www.distinctionmagazine.com) for an expanded list of chocolate desserts from local restaurants compiled by food writer Lyn Dobrin.*

**Bryant and Cooper Steak House, Roslyn**  
Chocolate Mousse

**Café Diane, Woodbury**  
Chocolate Angel Food Cake with chocolate sorbet

**City Cellar, Westbury**  
Warm Chocolate Cake (bittersweet chocolate, whipped cream, coffee-granité parfait)

**Four Food Studio, Melville**  
Chocolate Passionfruit Fondue for Two

**The Gatsby, Islip**  
Chocolate Soufflé Cake with bruléed banana and Bananas Foster ice cream

**George Martin The Original, Rockville Center**  
Signature George Martin Brownie Sundae with vanilla Häagen Dazs ice cream, chocolate sauce, whipped cream and M&M's

**Jonathan's, Huntington**  
Flourless Chocolate Cake with hazelnut gelato

**Mac's Steakhouse, Huntington**  
Warm Chocolate Pudding Cake (dark chocolate cake with a warm pudding center)

**Mirabelle, St. James**  
Housemade Chocolate Truffles

**Nisen Sushi, Woodbury**  
Chocolate Soufflé Cake

**Prime - An American Kitchen and Bar, Huntington**  
Chocolate Ecstasy (mousse bar, pudding cake, caramel tart)

**Sagamore Steakhouse, Syosset**  
Chocolate Toffee Marquise (dense dark chocolate mousse with butter toffee atop fudge brownie cake)