

The dark ARTS

Chocolate is seductive, addictive and quite simply delicious. With her lust for the sweet stuff showing no sign of fading, *Michelle Dickson* investigates our new obsession for even better chocolate and interviews two British chocolatiers on their recipes for success

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I LOVE chocolate – who doesn't? I can't get enough of the delicious stuff... dark or milk, high-end or high-street, I genuinely don't discriminate. Mine might be a life-long obsession but we humans have been enjoying the fruit of the cacao tree for, it's estimated, something in the region of 3,500 years. It's an enduring love affair, and one that shows no signs of fizzling out.

Today, the UK chocolate market is worth nearly £4 billion – and it's growing at an average of 5% each year. Not only are we buying it more, it seems our tastes in chocolate are changing, too. While the biggest-selling brands may still be our old faithfuls (Dairy Milk, launched by Cadbury in 1905, is still the UK chocolate market's biggest seller), according to market researchers Mintel: 'A notable pool of consumers are becoming more discerning when it comes to their choice of chocolate and are actively seeking out more top-end brands.'

With a much higher cocoa content (around 70% as compared to Dairy Milk's 26%), these more premium chocolates seem to appeal to consumers' demand for a 'healthier' chocolate (ie one with less added sugar and fat) than the traditional varieties that we grew up with. The success of higher cocoa content bars such as Green & Black's demonstrates not just changing tastes but also that we are prepared to pay more for a better quality, more sophisticated chocolate product – their 70% dark chocolate bar is one of the company's bestsellers with, they claim, one bar sold every 10 seconds in the UK.

Another consequence of the growing interest and knowledge in the market is the rise in so-called 'cocoa connoisseurs'. Says Sarah Jane Evans, a founder member of the Academy of Chocolate and author of *Chocolate Unwrapped* (Pavilion, £14.99), 'People are beginning to realise there is a different world of chocolate out there. They read about single-origin chocolate and are trading up to a higher cocoa percentage. They're also talking more about who produces cacao and how.'

Charlotte Turner, buyer for boxed chocolates at Sainsbury's, confirms that customers are inspired by high-end stores like Hotel Chocolat and looking for 'new and quirky types of chocolate. We've definitely seen demand for more premium products increase and the average spend on chocolate is rising as a result. Our Taste the Difference boxed chocolates, with flavours such as Buck's fizz and salted caramel, have seen a 30% rise year on year. People want to buy nice chocolate gifts and things that look good on their dinner tables – chocolate doesn't cost a lot, but still feels like a treat.'

And as the world of high-end 'posh' chocs expands, so too does the number of home-grown chocolatiers. According to Sarah Jane Evans, 'This is a brilliant time to be enjoying chocolate in the UK. While, up to this point, chocolate has been a fairly London-based business, it's now spreading further afield and more women chocolatiers are coming through too. Amelia Rope has won awards for her elegant, flavoured bars; plus there's Shelly Preston at Boutique Aromatique [boutiquearomatique.com]



Chocolate king: Paul A Young makes his award-winning chocolates by hand

and Sun Trigg at Lauden [laudenchocolate.com]. And chocolatiers are coming from very diverse backgrounds too; while there are pâtisseries by training like William Curley and his wife Suzue Aoyama Curley [williamcurley.co.uk], Paul A Young has a background in stellar cakes.'

We asked two of British chocolate's brightest stars how they got started and what inspires their work:

THE LEADING LIGHT

Chocolatier and leading light in the British chocolate scene, Paul A Young, above, has, in his time, dipped his fingers in many different foodie pies. He's worked as a pastry chef for Marco Pierre White, in food development for retailers, such as Sainsbury's, and on TV. Paul was working as a consultant for a desserts company when he realised chocolate could be his future.

'I went to Paris, to all the places that sold great chocolate and realised London had no fresh chocolates. There were pralines, Champagne truffles, classic truffles – the same wherever you went. Everything ▶

was preserved, and not how I, as a purist, believed it could be. That's how it all started, just from a natural progression and a gap in the market.

'Once my salted caramel won gold at The Academy of Chocolate Awards in 2004, the phone really started ringing. I started making chocolates for Chantal Coady at Rococo and Charbonnel et Walker, and then I decided to open my first shop on Camden Passage in Islington in 2006. My customers were open to a very new style of chocolate with no glucose, no sorbitol, no hydrogenated fats, no preservatives. I was warned there would be wastage as nobody had really tried it before but we found it's worked incredibly well.

'Seven years on, we've got four shops and my team has grown from two to 30. We make chocolates every day and temper every single piece of chocolate by hand – we have no machinery and we don't add anything artificial. All of my staff, apart from one, have been



'I still eat mainstream chocolate... I'm not going to stop eating the things I enjoyed as a child'

trained here. We've also started making our own chocolate from the bean, which is so exciting. My chocolates are expensive because we handmake them and only use the best ingredients.

'Inspiration for my chocolate comes from so many different places. From drinks – I love how complex blending a cocktail can be, combining bitter, sweet and sour. Rick Stein's TV series about India last year inspired me a lot. He talked about ingredients and things I've never used in chocolate, a variety of chillies and other spices. That's inspired me mainly because of the colours, textures and aromas – flavour doesn't always come first, which surprises a lot of people. With chocolate, the last thing you do is taste it. I don't have a formula – some ideas come from just chatting with the team – but the seasons have always inspired me. I try to use seasonal ingredients as much as possible.

'Luxury chocolate is growing in popularity and people are asking "where are the beans from?" and "what do the flavours taste of?", which is great. But I do feel that chocolate should not become elitist. There's a very big risk that within the industry itself it can be very snobby. I still eat mainstream chocolate, for enjoyment. I'm not going to stop eating the things I enjoyed as a child – there are some Thorntons chocolates that I still love because my grandma used to buy them for me when I was little.

'I eat a lot of my own chocolate and there are times when I think, "I can't eat any more," but then the next day comes, and my craving is back!' *Paul A Young has four shops in London and runs regular events and workshops (paulayoung.co.uk). Editor Helena visited his latest opening at Heal's in London's West End; find out more at sainsburysmagazine.co.uk/blog.* ▶

Chocolate cheesecake with salted caramel sauce

Serves 8-10

Prep 20 mins **Total time** 1 hr 10 mins, plus cooling

Get ahead Make the cheesecake up to 2 days ahead; chill. The salted caramel sauce can be made at the same time. The cheesecake can also be frozen, decorated or undecorated.

For the biscuit base

75g butter, plus extra for greasing

75g dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids), broken into pieces

250g digestive biscuits, crushed into fine crumbs

For the cheesecake topping

50g dark chocolate, broken into pieces

2 large eggs, separated

100g caster sugar

4 tbsp cocoa powder, sifted

50g ground almonds

1 x 150ml carton double cream

1 x 250g tub mascarpone

2 tbsp brandy (optional)

chocolate curls, to decorate

For the salted caramel sauce

175g granulated sugar

1 x 150ml carton double cream

1 tsp sea salt flakes

- 1 Preheat the oven to 160°C, fan 140°C, gas 3. Lightly butter and line a 20cm round springform tin with baking paper.
- 2 For the base, gently melt the butter and chocolate in a pan over a low heat or in the microwave. Add the crushed biscuits and mix together well, then spoon into the prepared tin and press on to the base in an even layer. Set aside.
- 3 For the cheesecake topping, melt the chocolate and leave to cool. Put the egg yolks and sugar into a large mixing bowl and whisk for about 5 minutes until thick and mousse-like. Set aside.
- 4 Mix the cocoa powder with the ground almonds. In another bowl, lightly whip the cream until it is just beginning to show signs of thickening. Put the mascarpone into a separate bowl and beat until smooth, then gently fold in the whipped cream. Fold this into the egg yolk mixture, followed by the cool melted chocolate, the cocoa and almond mixture and brandy.

- 5 Whisk the egg whites in a very clean bowl into slightly stiff peaks. Fold into the chocolate mixture with a large metal spoon.

- 6 Pour the mixture into the tin and bake for about 50 minutes until just set but still slightly wobbly in the centre.

- 7 For the salted caramel sauce, heat the sugar and 3 tablespoons water in a small, deep, heavy-based pan over a low heat until the sugar has dissolved and the syrup is clear. Don't stir it, just swirl the pan every now and then, brushing any sugar crystals down the sides of the pan with a pastry brush, dipped in water. When the syrup is clear, bring it to the boil and boil it for 6-7 minutes until it has turned into a dark amber-coloured caramel. Remove from the heat. Stand back and add the cream – take care as it will bubble furiously and rise up the sides of the pan. Return the pan to a low heat and stir gently until all the caramel has dissolved. Stir in the salt and set to one side. It will thicken but don't worry.

- 8 Take the cheesecake out of the oven and leave to cool in the tin. Thin down the caramel sauce with 1 tablespoon cold water. Drizzle it over the cheesecake and decorate with chocolate curls (see below).
■ 657cals; 45g fat (26g sat fat); 8g protein; 1g fibre; 53g carbs; 40g total sugars; 1.2g salt

HOW TO MAKE THE CHOCOLATE CURLS

◆ Melt 100g dark chocolate, then spread out to a 18 x 18cm square on a nonstick flat baking sheet and chill for 15 minutes.

◆ Using a dough cutter or the flat side of a wide-bladed knife and starting at the top, push the cutter into the chocolate and towards you to make it curl.

◆ Continue to make chocolate curls from the dark square, then repeat the process with 100g white chocolate, chilling the melted white chocolate for 30 minutes before curling.

◆ Chill all the curls to firm up.



**We're not even going to try to resist...
Chocolate cheesecake
with salted
caramel sauce**

THE ARTISAN

Amelia Rope's route into chocolate making was an unconventional one. After various jobs, including PA, aromatherapist and practice manager, an appearance as a contestant on *MasterChef* launched her chocolate career, and she began making bespoke chocolates for private clients. A surprise order from a contact for 1,000 chocolate bars gave her business the kick-start it needed.

'As a child I loved chocolate but my route into making it was pure chance. I was a contestant on *MasterChef* – I didn't win, but being told that the way I put my recipes together was unique and I should get myself trained gave me the boost to take it further.'

'I signed up for some chocolate courses at Valrhona, France, and learned about the different types of beans, how it was produced, the end-notes, the taste – I was completely mesmerised.'

'When I got my first big order in 2009, I was hand-foiling and wrapping the bars myself. Although I'm not trained, I do know how to work with chocolate and, while I love being a small, artisan producer, I had to think bigger in order to make a living. With other people to make the bars, I can concentrate on creating new recipes and flavours.'

'I launched my product in Selfridges in 2010 and am now stocked in Liberty and Fortnum & Mason, as well as exporting and selling online. Mine is still a small brand, but I know what sells and I supply all my own ingredients – that's very important to me.'

'I'm driven about what I do. I've given up so much for this – at one stage I moved 15 times in 15 months for the sake of more stock. If I believe in something, I won't give up.'

'I call my chocolate "collections" (I've long had aspirations to be a fashion designer). There are white, dark and pale (milk) collections and my palate drives the flavours. My rose is very intense; my pale mandarin much more subtle. I think of it like a massage oil blend where the oils sit at different levels. I'm a purist with my ingredients.'

'As chocolatiers, we all have the same starting point and want to educate people about what they are buying in the premium chocolate world, but we are also so different – different vision, different palates. I'm always looking to create new flavours because my taste buds crave new flavour combinations.'

Amelia Rope's single origin chocolate bar collections are stocked in Liberty, Selfridges, Fortnum & Mason and Whole Foods. To find a stockist near you or buy online, visit ameliarope.com.

'I didn't win MasterChef but it gave me the boost to take making chocolate a step further'



Building blocks: Amelia Rope's chocolate brand is growing

TELL ME MORE...

Want to make your own chocolate? Sarah Jane Evans of *The Academy of Chocolate* advises, 'Take a course – learn how to temper. Think about the chocolate you use. It's about finding the chocolate with the most character to match the chocolates you make. It's worth noting that darker isn't necessarily nicer and just because it is handmade, that doesn't mean it tastes good!'

♦ **WILLIAM CURLEY** (williamcurley.com) offers classes and events in his London store, including

truffle and sea salt caramel courses. Our food director Sarah Randell went along and loved it – find out more at sainsburysmagazine.co.uk/blog.

♦ **THE SCHOOL OF ARTISAN FOOD** (schoolofartisanfood.org) in Nottinghamshire runs a one-day Introduction to Artisan Chocolate Making.

♦ **ROCOCO** (rococo.chocolates.com) in London's Belgravia offers masterclasses in its own school, including tempering chocolate and truffle making. ▶

SPEEDY CHOC TREATS TO TRY

1 A quick chocolate sauce to serve over ice cream Heat 250ml single cream, 4 tablespoons light muscovado sugar, 75g salted butter, diced, and 1 tablespoon vanilla extract until hot but not boiling. Pour over 225g finely chopped plain chocolate in a bowl, leave to stand for 30 seconds, then stir until smooth. Serve warm.

2 Chocolate spiced butter to spread on to toasted hot cross buns Beat 100g soft butter in a bowl until creamy. Beat in a generous pinch of mixed spice, 25g cooled melted plain chocolate and 2 tablespoons each of cocoa powder and sifted icing sugar until smooth.

3 DIY chocolate croissants Break open your croissant and poke 25g of chocolate (milk or dark) pieces inside. Warm in the oven at 200°C, fan 180°C, gas 6, for 4-5 minutes until the chocolate has melted. If you like, you can add slices of banana before eating. This is also a delicious way to use up pieces of baguette.

4 Chocolate popcorn Melt 175g caster sugar, 4 tablespoons golden syrup, 25g cocoa powder, 100g butter and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract together in a pan. Stir in 1 x 70g bag lightly salted popcorn. Spread on a lined tray and bake at 120°C, fan 100°C, gas ½, for 30 minutes, stirring now and then. Break into small clumps when cold.

5 Chocolate and peanut butter milkshakes For 2 glasses, whiz together 250g ice-cold creamy milk with 100g chocolate spread, 50g smooth peanut butter, 1 tablespoon honey and 100g vanilla ice cream. Pour over ice and serve.



Velvety milk chocolate pots with raspberries

Serves 4-6

Prep 15 mins **Total time** 1 hr 30 mins, plus cooling

Get ahead Make a day ahead; chill. Serve at room temperature.

150g raspberries
100ml whole milk
1 x 300ml carton double cream
25g caster sugar
175g milk chocolate
1½ tsp vanilla extract
1 large egg, beaten
a little icing sugar, for dusting

- 1 Preheat the oven to 140°C, fan 120°C, gas 1. Boil a kettle of water. Put 100g of the raspberries into a small bowl and crush to a purée with a fork. Spoon evenly into 4 x 180ml (or 6 x 120ml) heatproof glass or china pots or ramekins and put them into a small roasting tin.
- 2 Put the milk, cream and sugar into a small pan and bring slowly to the boil,

stirring once or twice to dissolve the sugar. Meanwhile, finely chop the chocolate and put it into a mixing bowl. As soon as the milk mixture starts to bubble around the edge of the pan, take it off the heat. Leave for 1 minute to cool slightly, then pour on to the chocolate and stir until smooth. Stir in the vanilla extract and beaten egg. Strain the mixture through a sieve into a jug and divide equally between the pots.

- 3 Pour hot (but not boiling) water from the kettle into the roasting tin so that it comes halfway up the sides of the pots, carefully slide them into the oven and cook for 1 hour 15 minutes (or 1 hour for the smaller pots) until set but still very slightly wobbly. Remove the tray from the oven and the pots from the water – leave them to cool completely.
- 4 Top each one with a few raspberries and dust with icing sugar to serve.

Warning This recipe contains partially cooked eggs
 ■ 450cals; 38g fat (23g sat fat); 5g protein; 1g fibre; 23g carbs; 23g total sugars; 0.2g salt ▶

Chocolate orange Simnel cake with pistachio marzipan

Serves 12-14

A twist on the traditional Easter cake.

Prep 1 hr **Total time** 3 hrs 45 mins, plus overnight soaking

Get ahead Make a few days ahead. The cake will keep in an airtight container. Before decorating, the cake can be frozen.

400g mixed dried fruits (sultanas, raisins and currants)
50g cut mixed peel
125g natural coloured glacé cherries, quartered
finely grated zest and juice of 1 orange
225g self-raising flour
50g cocoa powder
2 tsp mixed spice
200g soft butter
225g light muscovado sugar
4 medium free-range eggs
100g dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids), chopped
3 tbsp whole milk
1-2 tbsp shredless marmalade, warmed
11 mini eggs, and a **72cm length of wide ribbon**, to decorate

For the pistachio marzipan

400g pistachio kernels
300g sifted icing sugar
1-2 medium free-range egg whites

- 1 The day before, put the dried fruits, mixed peel, cherries, orange zest and juice into a bowl, stir to mix, then cover with clingfilm and set aside overnight to soak.
- 2 Prepare the nuts for the marzipan the day before, too. Preheat the oven to 150°C, fan 130°C, gas 2. Drop the pistachio kernels into a pan of boiling water, lower the heat and simmer for 8 minutes. Drain, then leave to cool for 15 minutes. Tip on to a clean tea towel, wrap them up and rub vigorously to loosen the skins. Unwrap, then remove and discard all skins from the nuts. Spread them on a baking tray and dry out gently in the oven for 10-15 minutes – but don't let them brown. Set aside to dry further overnight.
- 3 The next day, preheat the oven to 150°C, fan 130°C, gas 2. Grease a 20cm loose-bottomed round cake tin (at least 8cm deep) and line with baking paper. Tie a thick band of folded newspaper around the outside of the tin to prevent the cake's edges overcooking.
- 4 To finish the marzipan, finely grind the pistachios in a food processor. Add the icing sugar and grind to a really fine mixture, then tip into a mixing bowl. Lightly whisk 1 egg white with a fork and stir in. Using your hand, knead the mixture until smooth. If it stays a bit crumbly, whisk the second egg white and add a little more, a tiny drop at a time until it binds together – take care as it can become too wet very quickly. Turn out on to a surface lightly dusted with icing sugar and knead until smooth. Divide into 3 even-sized pieces.
- 5 Sift the flour, cocoa powder, mixed spice and a pinch of salt together. In a separate bowl, cream the butter and sugar together for 5 minutes, using an electric hand whisk, until lighter in colour and texture. Beat in 2 eggs, one at a time, beating for 1 minute between each egg, then beat in the last 2 eggs, one at a time, with 1 tablespoon of the sifted flour to prevent curdling. Gently fold in the remaining flour mixture, followed by the soaked fruits, chocolate pieces and milk.
- 6 Spoon half the cake mixture into the tin and lightly level the surface with the back of a spoon. Roll out one piece of the marzipan into a 20cm disc using a rolling pin lightly dusted with icing sugar and lay it on top of the cake mixture. Press down gently, then cover with the rest of the cake mixture. Lightly level the top, then make the shallowest of dips in the centre. This will help to give your cake a nice flat top.
- 7 Bake the cake for about 2½ hours, covering with a loose folded sheet of baking paper after 2 hours, once it is nicely browned. When a skewer pushed into the centre comes away cleanly, the cake is done.
- 8 Leave to cool in the tin for 1 hour, then remove and leave to go cold on a wire rack.
- 9 To decorate, roll out a piece of the marzipan into a neat 20cm disc. Brush the top of the cake with some of the warm marmalade and lay the marzipan on top. Crimp the edges neatly with your fingers. Form the rest of the marzipan into 11 small neat balls, dot the underside of each one with a little marmalade and space evenly around the outside of the cake. Make a small dip in the top of each ball with your finger and add a mini egg to each one. Tie a wide ribbon around the outside of the cake.

Warning This recipe contains raw eggs

■ 695cals; 33g fat (13g sat fat); 12g protein; 3g fibre; 85g carbs; 73g total sugars; 0.6g salt ◆

MORE ONLINE

Want more choc-tastic recipes? Find our show-stopping chocolate meringue cake at sainsburysmagazine.co.uk

