

gourmetnews

FOOD * DINING * CULTURE * DESIGN

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TASTED AND RATED

TOP CHOCS

We put Quay chef Peter Gilmore, Black Star Pastry chef-patron Christopher Thé and our food director Emma Knowles in a room with six of the finest high-cocoa dark chocolates sold in Australia. They tasted them blind; here's what they had to say: **Valrhona Grand Cru Manjari 64% (France), \$13.50/70gm, Simon Johnson**

Peter Gilmore: Good intensity of flavour. Red berries, smooth on the palate. I like this one.

Emma Knowles: It's nice and clean on the palate, which I like. **Christopher Thé:** I like the fruit and smoothness, the well-rounded palate and the nutty finish. It's not too bitter.

Koko Black 74% (Australia), \$8/100gm, Koko Black CT: Hazelnuts. Much more bitter than the first chocolate. It cries out for nuts – praline, toffee, bitter on the finish. Quite good intensity and a warm, spicy note on the finish.

EK: A darker, richer flavour. Less intense, but well-rounded.

PG: A little more single-dimensional for me. It's quite round, but it's not going as many places, and the finish is shorter.

Callebaut Origine Madagascar 66% (Belgium), \$1/10gm, F Mayer Imports

EK: Not as complex as the first two, I find, just not quite as full.

CT: It's the style of this chocolate: it's quite buttery, with caramel notes. Dissipates quickly, but it has a peppery finish.

PG: Not much length of flavour; the grain is a little bit coarser.

Amedei Chuao 70% (Italy), \$18.50/50gm, Lario International

PG: This is really high-quality chocolate. The intensity of flavour is very apparent, the quality of the texture is there too. There's caramel and nuts there. Gorgeous.

EK: Dark toffee is the first thing that comes to mind here. It's really rich and beautiful, and the length is fantastic.

CT: The immediate warmth and coating of the palate sends shivers up your spine, but I find it more austere and refined than the first sample at the same time. Elegant.

Blanxart a la Taza, unrefined (Spain), \$19.75/200gm, The Spanish Pantry

PG: This is not fine couverture chocolate, so it's a totally different experience. It's almost like a Mexican style of traditional chocolate. There's a lot of spice in there, I think it's interesting.

CT: The first thing I got was ripe banana. You get that kind of fermented quality that reminds you it comes from a berry that's been fermented.

EK: Texturally it almost looks like it's not correct, especially when you see it next to the shine of the other ones, and there's that crystallised texture but I like it regardless. It's earthy.

Santander Single Origin 70% (Colombia), \$6.75/70gm, Simon Johnson

PG: I find this a lot sweeter, too sweet perhaps. I don't know if I rate this highly, but it's not a bad chocolate.

EK: I get a scorched note to it, but not in bad way. Definitely right up there on the sugar scale.

CT: There's a coolness there, almost like a camphor or menthol, and then also something like amaretto. *Stockists p170.*



HOT IN THE CITY

Nespresso's Citiz range takes its line of easy-to-use, ultra-consistent coffee machines into Deco design turf, drawing inspiration from the classic city skyline. Citiz also introduces the first double-head machine designed for home use – it's priced at \$699. Pictured is the entry-level espresso model, \$369. 1800 623 033



SIGNATURE DRINK

GOLDEN MONKEY'S GOLD LEAF

The onset of early autumn calls for a drink packing clarity and warmth in equal measures.

At Melbourne's Golden Monkey, edamame take the place of beer nuts, and roti, octopus balls and dumplings take the place of the usual bar snack suspects. Asia casts its spell over the cocktail list, too, of course, but it's not all chilli-infused shochu, jasmine syrup and lychee martinis: classics and Tiki drinks are staples, as are concoctions such as this one, which we'd like to categorise as simply refreshing. "It's a drink that's simple in its preparation yet smooth and sophisticated in flavour," says Golden Monkey's Mike Chen. "The warm finish makes it perfect for autumn drinking."

Golden Monkey, 389 Lonsdale St, Melbourne, Vic, (03) 9602 2055.

GOLDEN MONKEY'S GOLD LEAF

Half-fill a mixing glass or shaker with ice. Add 45ml of London dry gin, 15ml Grand Marnier and a couple of dashes of Angostura bitters. Stir thoroughly (the Monkey boys specify 15 times), strain into a chilled cocktail glass, garnish with an orange twist and serve without delay.

Cranes by Florence Broadhurst wallpaper from Signature Prints. All other props stylist's own. Stockists p170.



Golden Monkey's Gold Leaf



LIGHTBULB CATALOGUE

Kikki K, tireless advocate of bold, clean design and smart thinking, brings us the Everything Begins with an Idea daily notebook, part of its new 2009 range, \$19.95. kikki-k.com.au

CALENDAR

GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

With 100 events on the card, this year's Barossa Vintage Festival is the biggest ever. The shindig kicks off on 11 April, and over its nine days features a wide variety of events – and not just of the edible and potable kind. Jazz under a Hot Tin Roof, the Yalumba Harvest Market and the Vintage Festival Parade are just some of the highlights.

barossavintagefestival.com.au

TO THE FOUR

Learn to think like a chef with new cooking classes at Sydney's

Four in Hand. Starred chef Colin Fassnidge leads small classes through the likes of seared scallops with spiced avocado purée and grilled lamb with champ and salsa verde on the first Monday of each month for \$150 a head. (02) 9362 1999

GO TROPPO IN STYLE

Tastes of the Tropics sees a gaggle of big kitchen names cooking at Mission Beach's Elandra resort over April, May and June. Catch Matt Moran (April 5-10), Luke Mangan (May 10-15) and Geoff Lindsay (June 6-11). Packages

begin at \$2500 and include dinners, demonstrations, boating, five nights' accommodation and more. elandraresorts.com

THE TREE-CHANGE

Get back to the land with (very) hands-on paddock-to-plate classes at The Agrarian Kitchen just north of Hobart this month. They're \$275 a head. theagrariankitchen.com

SOUTHERN FLAVOUR

Throughout April, Sydney's Spitlers restaurant hosts a series of dinners looking at the locally little-seen cuisine of Peru. A Taste of Peru delves into

ceviche, tiradito, quinoa, rocoto and other Peruvian dishes and ingredients over five courses. It's \$115 a head, plus drinks. peruvianconcept.com

FRESH FROM THE FARM

The feature on farmers' markets in our February issue included incorrect schedule information for the Hume Murray Farmers' Market. It operates 8am-noon every second Saturday (not the second Saturday of each month) at Gateway Village, Lincoln Causeway, Wodonga, Victoria. 0438 582 996, hmf.org



CONGRATULATIONS FOOD-TRAGICS

In January's online competition we asked you to tell us of your symptoms in our search for the most tragic of food-tragics. We received thousands of entries – here are the winners.

Jeff Blanchard: "I wear a holstered Goyon Chazeau pâté knife 24/7 and the phrase 'Vive la Vue de Monde!' is tattooed on my inner thigh."

Grant LeQuesne: "I've re-programmed investment monitoring software to track the market price of truffles."

Sonia Orchard: "I'm embarrassed to admit I temporarily abandoned my husband on our Provençale honeymoon when I gained a place at a Ferran Adrià masterclass in Madrid."

Congratulations (or should that be commiserations?), you have won a 4.8 litre KitchenAid Artisan stand mixer. Keep visiting gourmettraveller.com.au for more polls and competitions.