

The finest Chocolate in the World? It's from Tuscany



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From Pisa, Amedei's sensual Toscano Black 63% has won the first-place award from London's Academy of Chocolate. A triumph of taste for the third year running



Italy is the land of excellence in the fields of art, wine and fashion. And its region of Tuscany is also in the spotlight when it comes to such a special sector as chocolate. Not only are there a number of outstanding factories between Pistoia and Pisa, which has been defined as Italy's "Chocolate Valley", but a little center near Pontedera has brought to us what the 300 international experts from London's Academy of Chocolate have deemed worthy of the "Golden Bean", a sort of Oscar for this divine treat.



The top ranking "Best Bean to Bar" chocolate in 2007 was Amedei's Toscano Black 63% (this being the proportion of pure cocoa it contains). In addition, an impressive eight awards - including gold and silver ones - were awarded to the company owned by the Tessieri siblings, who over the last few years have received the most highly acclaimed praises.

Young and enthusiastic, Cecilia and Alessio began in 1990 by choosing an approach that called for the highest possible quality and small numbers, with production of only 500-600 kilograms of finished product per day. Since then, they've won everyone's hearts. The most difficult accomplishment was one all chocolatiers in the world had dreamed of: becoming owners of the



legendary Chuau plantation, the most famous one in Venezuela, on which truly rare cocoa beans of exceptional quality are grown. To do this, they worked there alongside the farmers, sharing a love for the land and the problems of a plantation. This was a fundamental secret in Ecuador, Jamaica and Madagascar, as well, the areas providing the finest quality ingredients.

Amedei chocolate is produced entirely inside the company, from the fruit to the chocolate bars to praline. The staff consists of around only twenty people. Cecilia Tessieri is the maitre chocolatier (an art that has been practiced by very few women to date). She's the one who blends, invents and creates delicacies. "Our chocolate," she explains, "is to be enjoyed like an excellent wine; it's



something to be savored." Testifying to this are chefs of the caliber of Pierre Hermé and Ferran Adrià, who use the company's chocolates for their own culinary creations. Among Amedei's masterpieces is Porcelana, the most luxurious chocolate in their collection. 90 dollars for 450 grams of enticing seduction. Not by chance, according to a survey British women prefer chocolate to sex. "Because it never disappoints you," they say. And who could blame them?

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