

*From the Tuscan countryside to the coasts of Liguria, Amalfi, Apulia and Sicily: itineraries that guide you through stories that are truly "Made in Italy"!*



*Around the cities of art, across Mediterranean landscapes and through the flavours of our food and wines: experience the emotions of the "Dolce Vita"*

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## Discover Italian Chocolate

*Posted by E.I. staff*

She is the only woman to hold the highest award in her profession, the “Meilleur Ouvrier de la Grande-Bretagne” (MOGB). She has just been invested into the Disciple of Escoffier, regarded as the most rewarding accolade that the industry has ever provided. But, above all, she has just been awarded an MBE by Her Majesty the Queen for services to the catering industry. Her name is Claire Clark, and she is currently working on the TV show “Chocolate Covered”, a 13 part series celebrating excellence in chocolate which was also filmed in Italy. Emotions in Italy contacted Claire to find out more about her brilliant career and her Italian experience.

“I have been a pastry chef since I was 18 years of age and have worked in some of the finest hotels and restaurants in the world. In London I was head of pastry at The Connaught Hotel and at The Wolseley restaurant. I spent five years as head of pastry at the 3 Michelin starred The French Laundry in California and have also worked at The Ritz, Bluebird and a number of others.”



*Where do you think the best chocolate in Italy can be found?*

In July of this year we were lucky enough to be invited to film at the fabulous chocolate maker, Amedei, which is located close to Pisa in Tuscany, to meet head chocolatier Cecilia Tessieri. Cecilia showed me around her fabulous artisan facility and she and I made some chocolates between us. We then had a tasting of a number of her superb chocolates.

*What is so special about Amedei chocolate?*

I will reply using Cecilia’s own words: *‘When a master chocolatier succeeds in making people smile by eating chocolate, he or she has reached their goal. Tasting means being carried away by sensations. Our dedication at Amedei to the culture of chocolate in which technique is bound to creativity, expresses a passion that leads us to constantly move the balance among aromas, perfumes and tastes.’*

I, too, am passionate about chocolate and I hope that those who see my television series get pleasure from seeing excellence in chocolate in all its forms. “

*And what about Tuscany?*

It's a delicious place to visit. I can't wait to go back! I love its landscapes, its rich artistic legacy and its vast influence on art and culture, being the true birthplace of the Italian Renaissance and home to some of the most influential people in the history of arts and science, such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Galileo Galilei, Amerigo Vespucci and Puccini! It also has a unique culinary tradition and is as famous for its wines as it is for Amedei's chocolate!



Amedei is a famous name in the world of chocolate production. The company is located in Pontedera, a small town just a few kilometers from Pisa. The owner is master chocolatier Cecilia Tesseri, the first woman to hold this title in Italy. In 1991, the family-run company (named after Cecilia's maternal grandmother, Mrs. Amedei) which, at the time, was dedicated exclusively to marketing activities, gave Cecilia the task of creating a new concept in chocolate that would involve the whole production chain, from the selection of the cocoa bean plantations to the processing phase, including the elaboration of the tastes, flavors and aromas. Cecilia got to work and spent a lot of time seeking out and listening to the precious advice that the old artisan chocolate-makers gradually began to reveal, choosing to share with her an art that cannot just be learned from books. In 1998 came her first big success: the Toscano Black 70 she had created, was given the title of best chocolate in the world, with a 7 out of 7 score in a blind tasting. This was just the first of a long series of international awards (including one from the prestigious London Academy of Chocolate, the "Oscars" of the chocolate world that the company has won several times), thanks to the particular care taken in choosing the ingredients, many of which are typical Italian products, such as hazelnuts from Piedmont, almonds from Avola (Sicily) and pistachios from Bronte (Sicily).

Amedei's specialties include the only chocolate produced exclusively using the "Porcelana" genetic quality cocoa bean, an extreme chocolate, with a power and delicacy that is truly extraordinary, and a very original taste.

A visit to this company, that mainly employs women, is a must for gluttons as well as lovers of beauty. Recently two itineraries have been created, called "passion and emotion", that offer a chance to learn more about the chocolate production process and take part in delicious tastings.