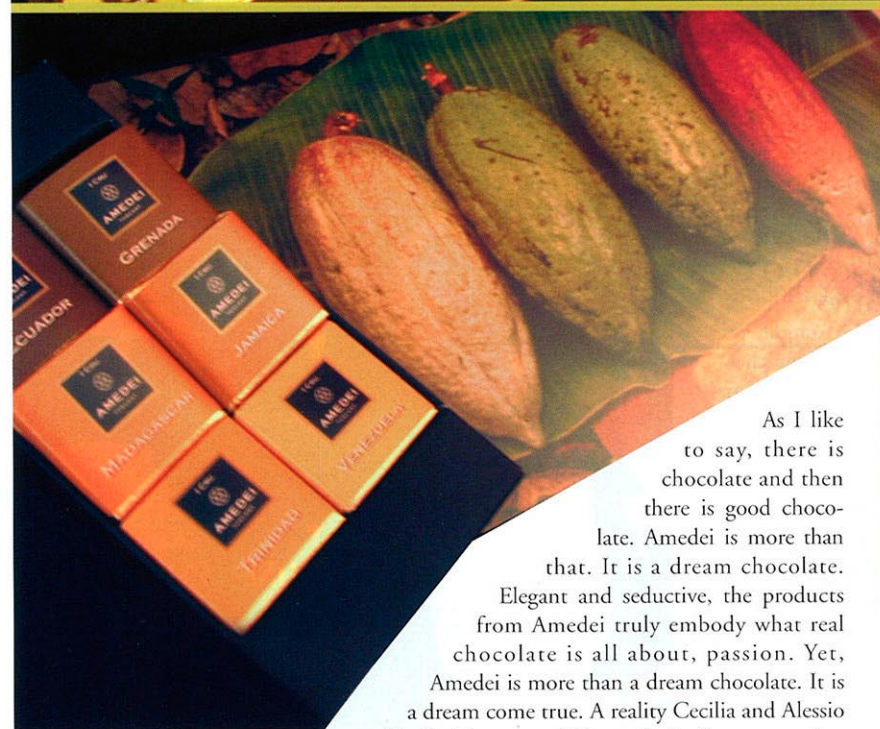




Amedei Chocolates

By Gabriel Riel-Salvatore

Chocolate lovers, treat yourself this Christmas with the unique and exquisite Amedei chocolates.



As I like to say, there is chocolate and then there is good chocolate. Amedei is more than that. It is a dream chocolate.

Elegant and seductive, the products from Amedei truly embody what real chocolate is all about, passion. Yet, Amedei is more than a dream chocolate. It is a dream come true. A reality Cecilia and Alessio Tessieri have carefully crafted after converting

their parents' pastry company into one of the most respected Tuscan chocolatiers. What is even more astonishing is that they were able to do so in just a little over fifteen years, reaching levels chocolate makers such as Valrhona or Richard Paris (France) took decades to achieve. Their secret? Making their own true chocolate with their own exclusive, imported cacao beans.

To make the best chocolate, the Tessieri siblings felt the need to avoid doing business with the usual brokers that generally sell anonymous cacao. Hence, they went about carefully selecting their beans travelling around the world's finest plantations simply to buy the best stuff available in such exotic places as Venezuela, Grenada, Jamaica, Ecuador, Madagascar and Trinidad. This, combined with their own innate savoir faire ensured the creation of true signature chocolates. Hence, Amedei advertises its products just like the greatest Bordeaux wine makers do, using the concept of cru. Like a Grand Cru Classé, Amedei cacao beans come from specific parcels of land that give their chocolate a distinctive and unique taste.

It is logical when you think about it that Italy would end up making the best chocolate. Italy already makes the best coffee in the world. Even the French won't argue on that one. Why? Simply because Italians are the best at roasting and preparing it, even if the



country is far from being covered by coffee groves. Amedei is located just south of Florence in the heart of Tuscany in what is now known as the Chocolate Valley, because of the concentration of chocolatiers based there. Renowned for its great wines, the region was far from being so famous before the Marchese Nicolò Incisa della Rocchetta and the Marchese Antinori initiated a wine making revolution with wines such as the Sassicaia and Ornellaia. Amedei might be Tuscany's next firestarter. It certainly has the credentials to do so, its cru Chuao already being considered the world's best chocolate by some of the greatest chefs in the world such as Ferran Adrià (from the famous El Bulli in Catalunya) and chocolate guru Pierre Hermé.

For an ultimate sensorial experience, I strongly recommend trying the Amedei chocolates with sweet natural wines such as a French Banyuls, an aged Rivesalte or a Vintage Port Wine. Some will even have them with a 12 year old Scotch-Whisky. I would personally go for an Italian vin santo (Isole e Olena), a Passito di Pantelleria (Donna Fugata) or a Venetian passito wine (Maculan). A convenient package of 12 Napolitans (chocolate cubes) six cocoa monorigin selection advertised as I Cru, is a perfect way to initiate yourself to Amedei's splendors. From one to the next, you will sense a clear difference, some being delicate and flowery (Grenada), others more powerful with redolent fragrances of wood and herbal scents (Jamaica). Yet, the ultimate bounty is probably Amedei's Chuao and Porcellana bars. The former offers elusive plum and red fruits flavours mixed with a pleasantly pungent aftertaste. The latter carries an exquisite and complex fruity flavour of toasted raisin ending on a mellow toasted almond sensation. For those who feel the need to taste them all or who want to spoil their loved ones, a gift box, "Le Selezioni", containing five of Amedei's top products is also available, although, just like any luxury product, Amedei chocolates are worth their weight in gold: count 8 to 9 \$ for a single bar. However, you might say that Amedei chocolates are like black gold. ❖

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