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TUSCAN CHOCOLATE TOPS THE WORLD

Amedei from Pisa wins 'Golden Bean' for third time



(ANSA) - Rome, February 18 - A luxury chocolate from Tuscany has been named the world's best.

'Toscano Black 63%', made by the Amedei firm in Pisa, won the Golden Bean for "best chocolate from bean to bar," awarded each year by the London-based Academy of Chocolate.

Amedei also won the top prize in 2005 and 2006.

This year three other Amedei products collected Gold Medals from the Academy, including its most expensive brand

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'Porcelana', made from porcelain-looking white cocoa.

A 450-gram bar of 'Porcelana' costs a cool \$90.

Amedei's other two golds were for its Chuao dark chocolate and its milk chocolate with hazelnuts.

What's more, Amedei won Silver Medals for four other products: Toscano Black 66%, Toscano Black 70%, '9', and Toscano Brown.

The prizes were awarded by a jury of chocolatiers and experts from about 300 chocolate companies.

Amedei thanked the Academy "for the seriousness and passion it puts in its worldwide work in search of good quality chocolate".

Amedei is available in top four-star and five-star hotels and restaurants and luxury retailers in Europe and America.

The Amedei range was launched by maitre chocolatier Cecilia Tessieri and her brother Alessio in 1990.

Only 20,000 bars are produced each year.

High-cocoa-content dark chocolate is enjoying a vogue among aficionados drawn by its purity and supposed medicinal qualities.

Italy prides itself on its wide variety of speciality chocolates, made exclusively from cocoa butter.

It has been successfully campaigned for recognition that its traditional chocolates are more natural than those produced in other countries. The Academy of Chocolate was launched in London in June 2005.

It aims "to promote greater awareness and understanding of fine chocolate, and to campaign for improvements in the quality," according to its website.

"It will encourage the transparent sourcing of cocoa beans from the plantations, and their production in socially fair and environmentally undamaging conditions".

photo: Cecilia Tessieri with a platter of her finest

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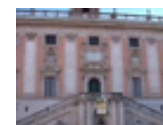
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