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CHOCOLATE IS FOR LOVERS

There's chocolate and there's CHOCOLATE. For Valentine's Day, you want the latter. Here are the ones that win our hearts. **For the young at heart:** Lip-shaped milk- and dark-chocolate lollipops are whimsical, but the hand-poured, -painted, and -wrapped treats also appeal to chocolate purists. \$2.99 each for the small, \$3.79 for the large at area Balducci's/Sutton Place Gourmet stores.

For serious food lovers: Bethesda-based Barbara Norman, aka the Blue Moon Chocolatier, has a new array of sweets. Among them are a lush pink-Champagne truffle; a white-chocolate truffle scented with real truffles; wafer minicones filled with raspberry-infused ganache and swiped in dark chocolate; and chocolate hearts with glazed fruit and roasted nuts. \$7 to \$58 at Periwinkle (202-364-3076) and Dalton Brody (202-244-7197) in DC, Bradley Food & Beverage in Bethesda (301-654-6966), River Falls Market in Potomac (301-765-8001), Finewine.com in Gaithersburg (301-987-5933), and Romance for the Senses in Alexandria (703-549-1102).

For artistic types: A large chocolate heart filled with chocolates, including white chocolate filled with white-chocolate cinnamon ganache. Jacques Poulain, a former pastry chef at Kinkead's and the Willard Hotel, airbrushes abstract designs on the hearts in shades of red and pink. \$24 at the new Cacao in Olney (301-774-5300).

For the health conscious: Large chocolate-covered strawberries in flavors like white chocolate with shredded coconut and dark chocolate with dark-chocolate curls. \$32 to \$75. Order in advance from Chocolate Chocolate in DC (202-466-2190).

For jet-set fashionistas: One Thousand and One Nights—seven varieties of chocolate from all over the world—include chocolate-cloaked lemon and orange slices, and green-chocolate-dipped almonds that look like olives. \$60 a pound, including custom packaging in one-to-three-pound keepsake jewelry boxes and fabric chests, at Crème de la Crème in DC (202-333-7773).

For the slightly naughty: A box of X-rated truffles: "Seduce Him"

This year's hit from Blue Moon Chocolatier is a white-chocolate truffle scented with real white truffles.



are made with cardamom, anise, and cinnamon, while "Seduce Her" feature dark-chocolate ganache with jasmine and ginger. \$26 for ten truffles (five of each) at area Godiva stores.

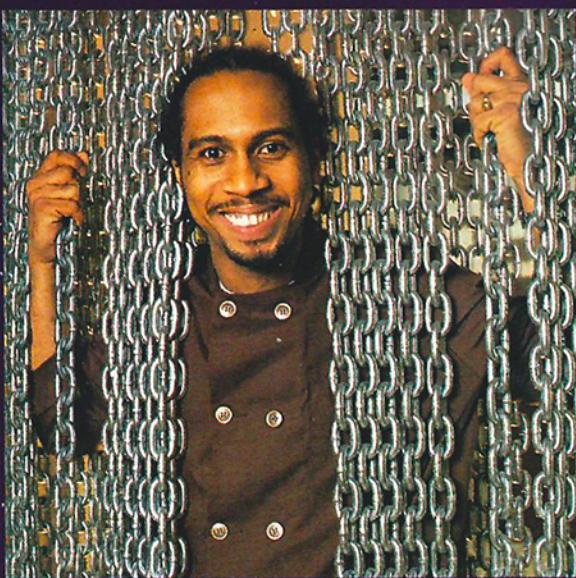
For the House & Garden set: Lavender creams, rose creams, and rose-infused and lavender-pistachio truffles are among the flavors in the 24-piece truffle and creams box, made with real rose petals. \$30 at Kingsbury Chocolates in Alexandria (703-548-2800).

For the Francophile: Intense French chocolates from Jean Claude Panel are fashioned with hazelnuts, praline, and pear and plum brandy. \$30 to \$50 at La Cuisine in Alexandria (703-836-4435).

For the romantic: Boxes fashioned from silk and paper flowers and filled with nine truffles are flown in weekly from Belgium. \$15.95 at Leonidas Chocolates in DC (202-944-1898).

For trend watchers: National Cathedral School grad Rachel Schifter Thebault, who started Tribeca Treats in New York, offers fantastical truffle combos such as the Orvieto and grappa ganache with dried currants. \$40 for 30 pieces. No less delicious are almond marzipan and dark-chocolate mint crunch (www.tribecatreats.com).

FROM THE CARIBBEAN BY WAY OF SWEDEN



Mango chicken, rum drinks, and . . . gravlax? Kingsley John brings a unique blend of flavors to Oya in Chinatown.

With a red crocodile-skin bar, white marble fireplaces, waterfall illusions on the walls, and capiz-shell chandeliers, **Oya**—slated to open in February—doesn't look like your average restaurant. Errol Lawrence, who grew up in DC and has run restaurants in Los Angeles, wants his Chinatown space to be both "a party every night" in the lounge area and a fine-dining destination.

Lawrence lured St. Lucia-born chef Kingsley John from New York, where he worked for eight years under renowned Aquavit chef Marcus Samuelsson. John says his menu is "all over the place," showing his Caribbean roots but also Samuelsson's Swedish influence. Take the jerk-salmon gravlax flatbread: John uses the gravlax and espresso-mustard sauce Samuelsson taught him, then sprinkles it with jerk spices and lays it on the type of flatbread he grew up with. Other appetizers include baby-conch salad with pineapple sorbet and jerk-

salmon avocado rolls.

Featured dinner entrées are pimiento-crusted duck with taro root; smoked lamb chops with green bananas and black-eyed peas; and a crispy whole fish surrounded by dill broth. At lunch there's curried goat, and mango barbecue chicken with callalou. Lunch entrées are \$12 to \$23, dinner main courses \$18 to \$35.

John hired Aquavit's Jean-Rony Fougere to craft the desserts. Look for chilled coconut soup with passionfruit dumplings, and a chocolate-mousse dome with spiced caramel.

Oya's favorite liquor is rum. Aquavit bar master Christian Post is helping John concoct a palette of infused rums. One cocktail blends spiced rum with ginger beer and sorrel. And flights of rum sorbets will be served in the lounge.

Oya (777 Ninth St., NW; 202-393-1400) is open weekdays for lunch and dinner. A late-night menu is served until 1 AM.

—ANN LIMPERT

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