

Is Belgian Chocolate the 'King of Chocolate'?



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London, April 2010 - For a small landlocked country nestled within the folds of Europe, Belgium has a big claim to fame. Talk chocolate, and Belgian seems to be the adjective that springs to mind when it comes to describing the absolute top quality.

From the chocolate bars available in shiny wrappers at supermarkets to the expensive candies and pralines that can be bought at exclusive downtown chocolate boutiques, the range of chocolate available on the market is as varied in taste as it is in the country of origin. But in Europe, the debate over where the best chocolate in the world is produced is a topic of heated debate and much discussion.

Belgians proudly claim to have the finest range of chocolates, considered by many chocolatiers to be the gourmet standard by which all other chocolates are measured. The French, on the other hand, hold up their centuries old tradition of making chocolate to support their claim to supremacy. Swiss chocolates, which are famous world over for their quality, often lose their way in the debate when the question comes to the basic recipe, for the Swiss love to make exotic and deliciously eccentric chocolates, a passion said to have been borrowed from the Belgians and French. Germany and Austria also both have a stake in the chocolate industry, but Belgium generally still comes out on top.

"I have always been a huge fan of Belgian chocolates. And while Godiva and Neuhas have some mouth-watering concoctions, my

favourite chocolate holiday in Belgium was a two week trip through the country, tasting chocolates made by smaller chocolatiers and some very distinct and wonderfully flavoured chocolates. I believe the Belgians create the same magic with chocolate that the French do with their wines", says Nicolas Vernaire, a chocolatier who runs an exclusive boutique in Oxfordshire.

Like Nicolas, many chocolatiers believe the Belgian chocolate is made unique by the quality of ingredients used and a fanatical adherence to Old World chocolate making methods. "Mass production of chocolates is sacrilege for a Belgian. And much like wineries, you can walk into chocolate shops in Belgium and take part in taster sessions and classes on chocolate making". Like everything good, the [best chocolate](#) also happens to be among the most expensive, and that is precisely the reason why, when you look up a dessert menu and see a [chocolate cake](#) that seems a little bit more expensive than you'd expected, remember to ask the waiter if the chocolate used is from Belgium. The chances are that it could have some mouth watering praline or truffles in it, making the extra pounds that you have to shell out worth every bite you take.

While the French and the Swiss closely tag the Belgians in terms of the quality and excellence of chocolate produced, the debate closes the moment you begin to talk of chocolate and luxury in the same breath, for the mentioning of Belgium cannot be far behind.

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