

# BIG SKY JOURNAL

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Yellowstone's Wild Winter Wonderland  
From Bean to Bar: Montana's Craft Chocolate Pioneers  
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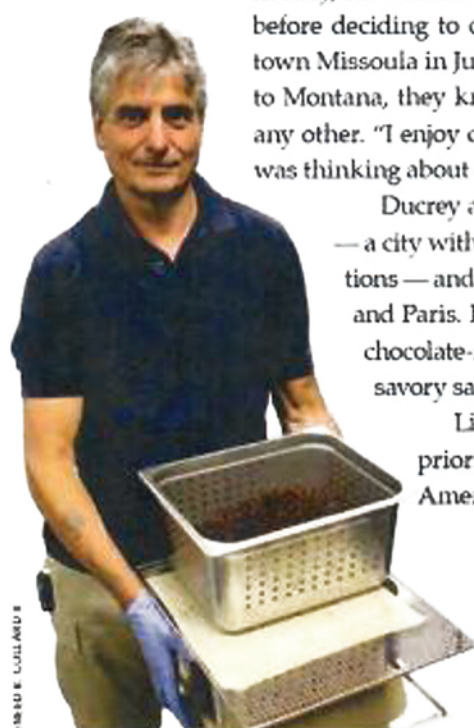


## A TOUCH OF EUROPE IN MONTANA

ONE OF MONTANA'S NEWEST BEAN-TO-BAR MAKERS, Francesco Ducrey, arrived in the state with a decidedly cosmopolitan pedigree. Born in Italy, he worked and lived in France, Argentina, and Switzerland before deciding to open Ducrey Chocolate Maker & Café in downtown Missoula in July 2020. When he and his partner Claudia moved to Montana, they knew they wanted to start a food business unlike any other. "I enjoy cooking, and I love great food," he explains, "so I was thinking about one of the most appealing of all foods: chocolate."

Ducrey attended a culinary institute outside of Turin, Italy—a city with one of the world's richest chocolate-making traditions—and he followed that up with internships in both Turin and Paris. He and Claudia launched their business as both a chocolate-making facility and a gourmet café offering coffee, savory sandwiches, and unique waffles.

Like other bean-to-bar makers, Ducrey places a high priority on working with small-scale farmers from the Americas, and their bars are certified organic and fair



**FROM TOP:** The complexity and variety of the world's cacao is showcased at Ducrey Chocolate Maker & Café in downtown Missoula, Montana. • Francesco Ducrey developed his chocolate-making craft in Italy and France before opening a shop in July 2020 with his partner Claudia.

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## TO BEAN, BAR, & BEYOND

trade. To further highlight the original cacao flavors, he chooses not to add extra cocoa butter, relying instead on the fat content of the beans, which, he points out, are not actually beans, but seeds of the fruit that grows on tropical cacao trees.

Likening bean-to-bar products to fine wines, Ducrey explains: "When you buy a chateau or an estate, you buy wine from a specific location, and you know what type of grapes were used to make it." He offers that same transparency with his products. "We have flavor peaks because we're offering a taste of nature, and no single batch is close or equivalent to another one," he says. "We're promoting that authenticity and natural variations in taste."

So, how does a chocolate novice like myself begin to explore these vast new varieties? "I always encourage my friends not to try a chocolate by itself," Ducrey suggests. "Always compare. Always try two. Take the last one that you enjoyed, and then the new one, and match them. If you don't have a benchmark, you cannot really focus."

To demonstrate this, he sends me home with a pair of 70 percent



Along with celebrating chocolate, Ducrey Chocolate Maker & Café offers an assortment of waffles, sandwiches, and beverages.

bars. Although both were made from beans grown on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, they came from different growers, and I hurried home and eagerly tasted them, comparing and contrasting as Ducrey had advised. Not surprisingly, both bars were incredible, but they were also markedly and deliciously different. It was a tasty example of the breadth of variation and quality in the world of bean-to-bar chocolate, and it left me eager for further investigation.▲

# TO BEAN, BAR, and BEYOND

BY SNEED B. COLLARD III

MONTANA CHOCOLATE PIONEERS  
FORGE NEW FLAVORS