

Pastry Virtuosity: Evolving Desserts with Plant-based Chocolates

August 24, 2021

111



(This article appeared in the Summer 2021 issue of Pastry Arts Magazine)

The market demand for plant-based sweets continues to grow. Overall, consumers are driving this trend, which can leave classically trained professionals at a disadvantage as they learn to avoid eggs and dairy. Collectively, we must adjust to ratios favoring coconut, almond, oat, rice and nut products to deliver plant-based desserts of exceptional quality.

Responding to this upward climb, several companies have released chocolate offerings for professionals. This not only addresses the market need, but provides chefs, chocolatiers, and bakers with new technical ingredients of high quality that can be used to create dessert, bakery and confectionary items.

Casa Luker has introduced a 43% Oak Milk Chocolate, which utilizes rice and oat powder to complement their Fina de Aroma cacao beans from Columbia. Described as a couverture, the product is also soy- and nut-free. The complete ingredient listing is sugar, cocoa butter, gluten-free oat powder, cocoa mass, dried rice powder, sunflower lecithin and vanilla extract. This chocolate is malty with the flavor of toasted oats, which tastes great in cookies, ganaches and mousses.

A new chocolate from Valrhona, who historically have provided technical solutions for chefs in their offerings, is Amatika. Described as a 46% vegan milk chocolate, the result is a cocoa rich milk chocolate with a toasted almond profile. This makes sense, as their ingredient listing reveals ground almonds in addition to sugar, cocoa butter, cacao beans, sunflower lecithin, and natural vanilla flavor. Amatika is versatile and flavorful with a clean

finish. In the Amatika Travel Cake by l'Ecole Valrhona, this milk chocolate is blended with hazelnut paste to make a praline, enrobes popped wild rice, and is thinned with grapeseed oil to make a glaze.



Rice Pudding Cocoa Custard, made with Niu chocolate

Barry Callebaut released another interesting chocolate a few years ago under the Van Leer label that also finds a place in plant-based recipes where an alternative to cane and beet sugar is preferable. Niu is a 65% organic dark chocolate that uses coconut sugar as a sweetener. Technically a plant-based chocolate, Niu allows chefs the opportunity to craft recipes with a lower glycemic index than chocolates produced with sugar. Since organic items and coconut are favorite aspects of plant-based consumers, this is a product that is easy for them to understand and enjoy. In Rice Pudding Cocoa Custard, Niu is used to create a dark chocolate custard layer to complement coconut rice pudding. Niu can be also used for molding and enrobing as well.

We can best explore these chocolates by considering them not as just plant-based milk or dark chocolates, but rather as new and unique ingredients that require the requisite creativity and experimentation to perfect. The Luker 43% Oat Milk Chocolate, Valrhona Amatika and Van Leer Niu are three flavorful additions to the pastry chef pantry.



Amatika Travel Cake by L'École Valrhona.

About the Author

Jimmy MacMillan is a celebrated pastry chef, food writer and award-winning videographer. Chef MacMillan is a pastry consultant working under the Pastry Virtuosity label. For more information, visit: www.PastryVirtuosity.com and [@jimmymacmillan](https://www.instagram.com/jimmymacmillan)