

First Look: Bean-to-Bar Chocolate at ChocoVivo, LA

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Gallery

[First Look: Bean-to-Bar Chocolate at ChocoVivo, LA](#)

[Photographs: Rachel Leeson]

Note: First Looks give previews of new dishes, drinks, and menus we're curious about. Since they are arranged photo shoots and interviews with restaurants, we do not make critical evaluations or recommendations.

When asked about her travels to Mexico, specifically how they shaped her perspective on chocolate, Patricia Tsai said, "Chocolate is food, not confection or candy." Not a surprising response from the owner and chief chocolate maker at the newly opened [ChocoVivo](#) in Culver City.

It was traveling to Mexico that started it all—her journey from being an accountant to being a chocolate maker. Mexico reshaped her entire perspective on chocolate and kick-started a passion for uncovering pure chocolate and learning how to make it.

Today, Tsai's passion has evolved to include sharing her knowledge with chocolate enthusiasts. She is just one of a handful of producers of untempered chocolate, and ChocoVivo is the first bean-to-bar chocolate factory in Los Angeles. Visiting ChocoVivo is as much of a tasting experience as it is a learning one.



Tasting counter

Tsai doesn't conch or temper her chocolate; she only stone grinds it and no additional cacao butter, flavorings, additives or oils are used.

Tsai produces only dark chocolate and one bite is enough to understand that she is indeed doing things quite differently: the chocolate is simple, lovely in its texture and packed with rich flavors that are distinctly chocolaty, but completely unique. What makes ChocoVivo's chocolate different is that Tsai doesn't conch or temper her chocolate; she only stone grinds it and no additional cacao butter, flavorings, additives or oils are used.

ChocoVivo's mantra is "simple is better." That's why you'll find no more than a handful of easy-to-pronounce ingredients listed. For example, the Hazelnuts + Sea Salt chocolate is composed of only four ingredients: cacao, unrefined cane sugar, Freddy Guys hazelnuts, and sea salt.

Tsai's new store in Culver City marks continued growth in her chocolate journey. Unlike her old Abbot Kinney location, she now has an on-site production kitchen, so all chocolate can be produced in-house. She's also added drinking chocolate (\$3.50-\$4.50) to her menu and has plans to add doughnuts with dipping chocolate to the menu, as well as savory bites featuring ChocoVivo's chocolate.

Click through the slideshow above to see more of the chocolates at Chocovivo.

About the author: [Rachel Leeson](#) is the biggest fan of Nutella and Peanut Butter & Co.'s Cinnamon Raisin Swirl peanut butter. She lived in New York City for four years and learned one thing: L.A.'s year round sunshine cannot be beat; In-N-Out doesn't hurt either. You can follow her on Twitter [@RachelDLeeson](#).

