



Salted Caramels, Hotel Chocolat



Hotel Chocolat

CONFESSION OF A CHOCAHOLIC

To celebrate the upcoming Chocolate Week (8th-14th October) our very own Features Writer, Living Girl and lover of all food (and we mean all), Justine Clegg reveals all into her love for this one type of food in particular and confesses to a spot of chocolate hoarding too...



www.babyblooms.co.uk



Justine's Office Drawer



JME Hello Sailor Bar



Ginger & Lime Chocolate, Waitrose.



Donald Russell

I know most of you reading this will think, "Here we go again, another woman who think she's funny and has replaced the lack of men in her life with a bar of soft, silky and smooth chocolate", well I'll forgive you for thinking it but you'll be pleased to hear I'm just your average Joe, yes I have a sense of humour but nothing I push the boat out on and I live with my childhood sweetheart with who I quite happily plod along life with. So no, I'm not here to give you any sort of life changing advice and more importantly why do you have to replace a man with chocolate when you can have both? It baffles me. Substituting turkey for chicken, sure I understand that.

But enough spiel of chicken, turkey and men, chocolate is why we're all here after all. And what's tickling my tastebuds at the moment? Quirky flavours. One quirky flavour in particular...sea salt. If you haven't already jumped on this bang wagon then I seriously recommend you stop reading and take a trip to your supermarket, indulge and then come back to me with the amazing feedback. I eased myself in with a few salted caramels first from Hotel Chocolat, my go to chocolatier. In fact let me just have a little rant first, you know the offer they have on their small packs of chocolates - £3.50 each or £2.95 for 3 or more? I end up walking out of that shop broke! It's too good of a deal to miss as I'll never just buy the one, who would? And they tease you with the massive selection as if to say how could you choose just one? Anyway, where was I? Salted chocolate, the new phenomenon. After being hooked left right and centre on salted caramels it was the Hello Sailor bar (£2) from Jamie Oliver's range Jme that enticed me to try. I mean I trust this guy! Somehow the salt brings something (that I can't put my finger on) out in the flavour, it's subtle and still sweet and in my mind works best on dark chocolate – a la Lindt Dark with a touch of Sea Salt.

As for other quirky flavours think gourmet like Willie's Delectable Cacao Sierra Leone 70 Ginger & Lime Dark Chocolate (£1.80, Waitrose) and the delightful treats from premium chocolatier Amelia Rope such as her delicate Pale Rose bar and punchy Dark Lemon bar (£5.60 each www.ameliarope.com). The whole chilli and chocolate movement hasn't convinced me, so I can't say I'm marching behind – in my eyes it doesn't add any flavour, just gives a disturbing burning sensation once swallowed. Not my cup of tea. What I am a fan of though is Donald Russell's Chocolate and Banana fondant puddings, don't knock it until you've tried it!

On the subject of gourmet, after visiting the BBC Good Food Show this summer, I'm addicted to gourmet popcorn brand Joe & Sephs. If you haven't heard of these guys already then I can forgive you after only being around for just over a year. But talk about an explosion of tastes, where they focus on layers of flavour – a hit of one ingredient, then a punch of another followed by an after taste once swallowed. I'm calling it clever food! The chocolatey versions of the popcorn Caramel & White Chocolate and Caramel with Belgian Chocolate can only be described in the non-descriptive way of being *totes amaze*. Which leads me onto my new gift sensation of chocolate trees! I know slightly unrelated. Nonetheless these are blooming marvellous (excuse the pun!) and pretty epic to a point where all my friends and family will probably be receiving one at some point soon. Having seen a Ferrero Rocher one first in a restaurant, I was quick to research this new sensation on Google when I got home. And you should too, check out www.babyblooms.co.uk (who also sell some gorgeous looking chocolate flowers) along with the Sweetie Trees at www.thesweetshopsaffronwalden.co.uk.

As for my confession...I'm a chocolate hoarder. God forbid if you find my stash. I like to romanticise it like in the Galaxy chocolate advert, but who am I kidding the real reason is when it comes to chocolate I'm completely and utterly selfish. I even go to the extent of hiding my gourmet delights and buying cheaper chocolate that I have no problem in sharing!

We want to hear about your naughty chocolate indulgences. Tag us in some pictures on facebook and twitter and the best ones will be shown on our website www.staffordshireliving.co.uk