

# My kind of country

Amelia Rope

THE AWARD-WINNING CHOCOLATIER LOVES RELAXING IN THE SOMERSET COUNTRYSIDE



PEOPLE, PLACES & PASSIONS



**What do you love most about the country?**

As soon as I breathe in the country air I feel at home. Whenever I can, I escape to Somerset from London to stay with my cousin Rebecca. It's so old fashioned and unspoilt here. I love turning into the drive and seeing the kunekune pigs foraging under the apple trees. Then out bomb the dogs, Tarka and Tullie, to say hello.

**Sum up your perfect country home.** Ideally somewhere close to the sea, a house where friends and family can gather together to relax, recharge, laugh, eat, walk and sleep. I don't hanker after somewhere grand. It needs to feel lived in, and have plenty of light and space. The sun should touch every room at some stage during the day. I'd also love to have a vegetable patch, fruit trees and a rose garden.

**What inspires you most about living in the country?** The one thing that can restore my balance is being out in the countryside. It's the air, seeing nature all around and the changing seasons. And food tastes much more delicious. I love the way you can head off for a long walk without getting into a car.

**When it comes to chocolate, where do you find inspiration?** Colour inspires me, art and architecture, people talking about their life experiences, getting out and about. I also find inspiration from my days as a qualified aromatherapist – that's where I got the idea for my award-winning Pale Rose flavour.

**What do you love about making chocolate?** It's the aroma, the way you can melt something and remould it, flavour it and create your character in the end product. I love the way it is challenging, too – it needs to be worked at a controlled temperature and humidity and anyone trying to temper

**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** Bars of Amelia's handmade chocolate; her favourite weekend destination; with pigs Guinevere and Arthur; and dogs border terrier Tarka and Hungarian Vizsla Tullie; St Martin's, Kingsbury Episcopi; Amelia's new line - the chocolate cube collections.



chocolate will know what an art it is. I used to work on a small marble slab when I first started, with no air conditioning; during the summer I had to work into the early hours to complete the orders, as that was the only time cool enough.

**What is your favourite thing in your current range?** My newest creation is the chocolate cube collection. I look at them and dream of mosaics, blue sea, white buildings and feel the sun on my back for the Pale and Pale Sea Salt Collections. I think of stained-glass windows when I look at the Dark Collection. My favourite is the new Special Edition Smoked Cashew Nut flavour.

**The local shop you'd recommend?** It has to be Julian Temperley's Somerset Cider Brandy Company, up the road in Kingsbury Episcopi. Cider has been made there for two centuries.

**Your favourite local restaurant?** We don't tend to eat out much, preferring instead to cook fresh seasonal produce at home – that way no one has to drive or babysit. If we go out, we like the Lord Poulett Arms, a 17th-century inn in beautiful Hinton St George.

**What is your earliest memory of being in the countryside?** I was born at Layer Marney in Essex. I used to have ponies when I was little and I have such fond memories of them – Pippin, Pixie, then Merlin, who was the naughtiest pony ever. My father shared a boat on the River Orwell in Suffolk, so weekends usually found us messing about on the water. All our holidays were spent in Trebetherick in Cornwall, where we'd bundle into a rented house for two weeks – cousins, uncles and aunts, grandparents, everyone.

**Describe your perfect weekend.** Loading up my car with goodies and heading off to Somerset. Even if I arrive late on Friday, it is worth it to wake up on Saturday and hear the horses clip clopping past, and truly feel relaxed. We usually drift, having a leisurely breakfast, then walk the dogs or do jobs in the garden. On Sundays we read the papers and sometimes go for a pub lunch.

**What is your favourite seasonal food?** In winter I love celeriac, Jerusalem artichokes, kale, purple sprouting broccoli and leeks. My whole family love growing their own. I also like game and in particular venison.

**Your favourite local food supplier?** Ivan Thompson's The Sausage Shed in Stembidge for the most amazing sausages and pork.

**Amelia Rope, ameliarope.com.** Amelia's luxury chocolate collection is available online and also from Liberty, Selfridges and Whole Foods.

SEE PAGE 141 FOR PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES



I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT...  
'A scarf, hot baths,  
sea salt and chocolate'



FEATURE SARAH WILSON PHOTOGRAPHS POLLY ELTES (FOOD) PC IMAGES/HOWARD SHOOTER/88



**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP** Seasonal vegetables; home cooking; with Ivan Thompson of The Sausage Shed - note the number plate; the Lord Poulett Arms, Hinton St George; visiting The Somerset Cider Brandy Company.

