

CELEBRATING GREAT BRITISH PRODUCE. JOIN US



AMELIA ROPE

MONDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2014 BY SOPHIE DENING IN PRODUCER PROFILES



Dark Seat Salt Chocolate

The British chocolatier talks to us about Valentine's Day, what makes her chocolate British, and how she is inspired by her cravings.

How long have you been a chocolatier?

I founded the business in September 2007. My big turning point that year was a commission for my first 1,000 chocolate bars from Patrick Reeves of sofa.com. At that point I realised I had a product I could bring to market, since it was scalable, and had shelf life.

How did you get into the trade?

I am not trained. I went on a five-day course at Valrhona in between Masterchef appearances (I am not a chef, either!). My background is rather eclectic: I draw on my time as a PA to be efficient admin-wise, and my managerial experience helps with budgets and so on. I'm a qualified aromatherapist, too, and that shows in the way I blend my recipes. I found myself with a chocolate business sort of by accident: I created my own truffles and crystallised chocolate-dipped flora, and it all happened from there.

Has anyone inspired you or mentored you?

A life coach, and Patrick Reeves.

So what do you make, and how do you work?

I make single-origin chocolate bars. The way I create my recipes is through my tastebuds having a specific craving. I then play around at home and, if I become addicted, I roll it out as a bar, since I feel there will be other souls who will respond in the same way!

How often do you introduce new products?

If I had my wish I would be introducing them every week, as I love creating and designing! I aim to introduce between four and six new bars a year, and I'm hoping to introduce at least one, if not two, new products for this year.

Is there a seasonal aspect to your recipes?

Yes, absolutely: Christmas, Easter, Valentine's.

Is there something distinctively British about Amelia Rope chocolate?

Taste it and see! The packaging I think is quite distinctive, too. And I think the British stretch the imagination with flavours and combinations.

Do you have a favourite product of yours? What sells fastest?

I am attached to them all, but the most popular are the Sea Salts and Pale Rose.

What have been your proudest moments?

Producing my first chocolate bar, thanks to that commission from Patrick Reeves and Rohan Blacker of sofa.com; and winning four awards from the Academy of Chocolate in 2011.

Do you have loyal customers, and do you get nice feedback?

I do have loyal customers, and it always makes me feel proud when they say the love my chocolate. As I do all my online orders myself, I can see the customers who have been with me since I started the website. Feedback is so important – and nice feedback is heaven when you work all hours of the day, and some nights, too! I am so touched when customers take the trouble to email me.

What is your idea of a non-chocolate treat ?

Sashimi or Thai food.

Who are your food heroes?

Jamie Oliver for making things simple, getting everyone back into cooking, and being such a force for education. Also Tom Kime, and Maria Elias, both for their brilliance with flavours.

What's next?

A trip to Colombia in a few weeks' time, to meet some Colombian cocoa producers. And raising a slab of investment to help propel the business at a faster pace.

And is Valentine's Day a big thing for you?

This year the Conran Shop asked me to do an exclusive design for them, for my Pale Sea Salt Collection (23 foiled in red and one foiled in white). I also do a bespoke Valentine's gift online. I haven't got into chocolate hearts yet!

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COCOA CHANNEL

THURSDAY 28TH MARCH 2013

Artisan chocolate is all too often considered a French thing. The Brits, by contrast, were always better known for mass producing it, and flogging it cheap. But while we will always have a special fondness for Cadbury's and Rowntree's, today the chocolate landscape (oh just imagine such a thing) is a beautifully crafted affair. Just in time for Easter we've rounded up a feast of artisan British chocolatiers.

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HOTEL CHOCOLAT

THURSDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2013

As Chocolate Week reaches its climax, Hotel Chocolat's Angus Thirlwell explains why chocolate is more than just a guilty pleasure, how cocoa can be as good as aspirin, and why we should expect some surprises at his upcoming restaurant in Borough Market.

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FRIDAY FLAVOUR MATCHMAKING

FRIDAY 25TH JANUARY 2013

Anyone still attempting any kind of January abstention programme look away now. The rest of us are going over to the dark side. Today's food pairing is the ultimate antidote to the long wintry nights, and the perfect foil for foggy mornings: espresso coffee with rich dark chocolate. Who can resist, really?

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