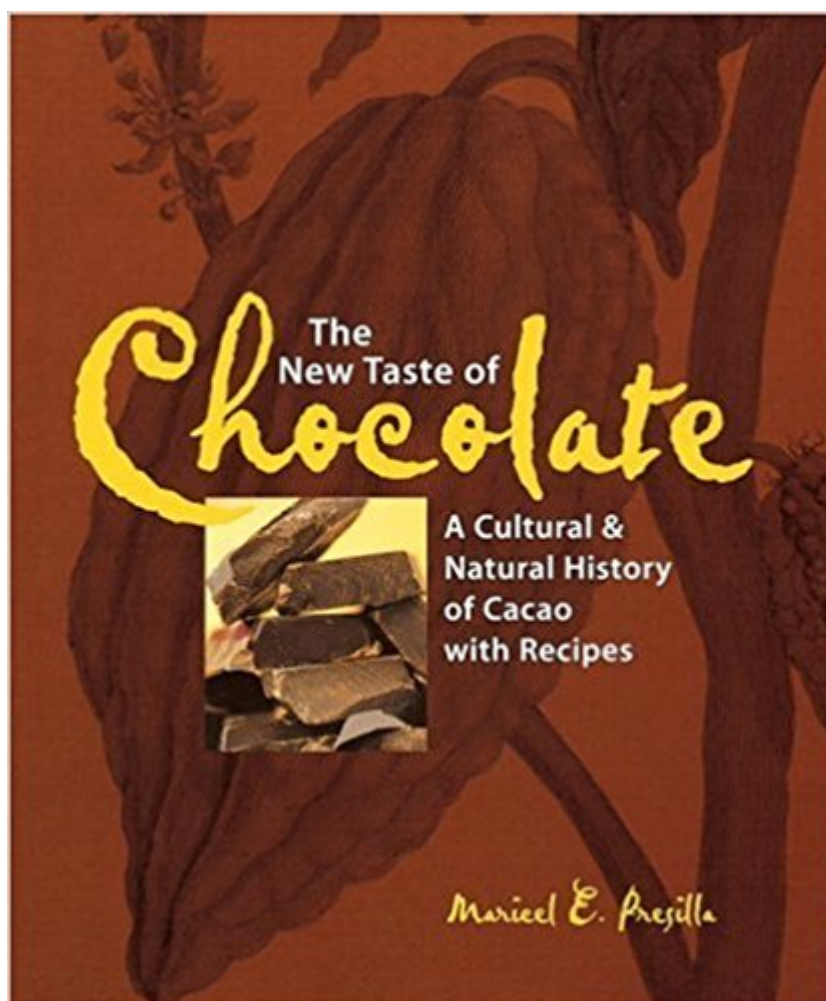


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# The New Taste Of Chocolate: A Cultural And Natural History Of Cacao With Recipes



## Synopsis

Cacao importer and chocolate expert Maricel Presilla takes chocoholics to new territory to the almost primeval plantations of Latin America, where the world's first, and today's finest, cacaos are grown. Presilla, who is at the forefront of the revolution in fine chocolate making, explains that the flavor and quality of chocolate depend on the complex genetic profiles of different cacao strains and on cacao farmers carrying out careful, rigorous harvesting and fermentation practices. With 25 recipes from internationally known pastry chefs and chocolatiers like Pierre Hermé and Elizabeth Faulkner, and directions for making chocolate at home, *THE NEW TASTE OF CHOCOLATE* elevates our taste for this food of the gods to a whole new level. Presilla is a cacao supplier for premier chocolate makers, such as Scharffen Berger and Guittard, and a consultant to the world's top pastry chefs. Over 100 gorgeous location, identification, and food photos.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 160 pages

Publisher: Ten Speed Press (October 1, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1580081436

ISBN-13: 978-1580081436

Product Dimensions: 10.3 x 8.4 x 0.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #780,049 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #138 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking by Ingredient > Chocolate #1045 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking Education & Reference > History #1982 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Desserts

## Customer Reviews

The first time Maricel Presilla tasted cocoa from her grandmother's farm in eastern Cuba, she expected the papaya-looking fruit to be full of Hershey kisses. Instead she saw lumpy, tan-colored seeds in a sticky, sweet-tart ivory pulp that reminded her of lychees, and it didn't even smell like chocolate. In *The New Taste of Chocolate*, Presilla follows the life of a cocoa pod from a sapling through harvest, fermentation, roasting, and production to arrive at what we all recognize as chocolate. Formally trained in cultural anthropology, Presilla relates the history of chocolate from

even before the Aztecs. With attention to detail, she gives an overview of cocoa plantations and their farming practices and the different strains of true cocoa, *Theobroma cacao*. About two dozen unusual, interesting recipes follow, each by a different chef or pastry chef. Wayne Brachman's Pecan-Guaranda Chocolate Tart with Mango and Papaya reminds us of cocoa's tropical roots, while Pierre Hermé's Chocolate Croquettes with Coconut, Pistachio, and Pearl Tapioca Sauce are pure elegance. You'll never look at chocolate the same way again. --Leora Y. Bloom

Presilla, a marketing consultant for a Latin American chocolate producer, explains the history, science and production of what many consider the world's most delectable snack. Guiding readers into the Latin American tropics for an extended look at *Theobroma cacao*, the "source of every chocolate bar and truffle ever made," Presilla also offers a primer on cacao farming, historical tidbits (e.g., Europeans used to flavor chocolate with aromatics like rosewater and ambergris) and a lesson on chocolate appreciation for would-be connoisseurs. Chocolate fiends in search of instant gratification should flip to the last chapter, a sampling of recipes that includes noted pastry chef Laurent Tourondel's heavenly Two-Toned Candied Cacao Beans Dipped in Chocolate and a recipe dating from the Italian Renaissance for Chocolate Jasmine Ice Cream. However, while some of the writing is wonderfully evocative (cacao pods are compared to "parrots and macaws perched on trees"), much of it is verbose ("The stars of the Marper experiment were several lines of IMCs from the Iquitos Marañon River Area, and the Peruvian Scavinas, Nanay, and Parinari selections"). And while industry professionals may lap up the sections with such titles as "Imperial College Selections 1 to 100," most lay people will find such morsels unappetizing. That's a pity, since on the whole Presilla's is a useful reference work that will appeal to anyone with an interest in artisanal foods and their production. Color photos not seen by PW. (May)Forecast: Chocolate has so many passionate enthusiasts that this book could attract attention, especially if it gets enough advertising.

Unfortunately, since the book's primary potential is as an impulse buy or a gift item, it has not been blessed with a catchy title or cover. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

The New Taste of Chocolate has the beautiful pictures of a coffee table book, but it has a lot of academic substance and a lot of value to the reader. The main chapters are: - Growing Up with Cacao - A Natural and Cultural History of Chocolate - From Cacao to Chocolate - Identifying Cacao - Tasting Chocolate - Recipes There is also a glossary, and a list of companies to order fine chocolate from. For a beginner like myself, who loved chocolate but hadn't progressed much beyond Hershey's with Almonds when I read the book, The New Taste of Chocolate was very

educational. It explained the path from cacao bean to chocolate bar, and it also explained the difference between dark chocolate, milk chocolate and white chocolate. It explained how cocoa powder comes from chocolate, why chocolate is so difficult to make candy with if you don't know what you're doing, and why fancier recipes will sometimes specify chocolate manufacturer and cacao percentage. It was also quite interesting to read about the guidelines for tasting chocolate. The discussion about criollo, forastero, and trinitario cacao plants was very fascinating from a scientific standpoint. I later found that what is true for cacao trees is true for many other types of plants (including wheat): the plants that make the tastiest & highest quality edible parts are also the least productive and most delicate, so growers & breeders have to choose whether to grow something that will almost certainly produce a less-desired but still profitable crop, or to grow something that has an uncertain yield but is highly profitable should the plant actually produce anything. The recipes were also interesting. After reading this book, I became more adventurous in my chocolate-tasting and started trying some of the European imports I see in the local grocery stores. My only regret is I am now knowledgeable enough and my tastes are spoiled enough that M&Ms and Hersheys with Almonds seem pretty bland.

Awesome Book. I love the in depth history of Cocoa through the centuries. It was exactly for what I was looking. If one is expecting a cook book although it does contain some recipes, it is not the main purpose for which the books was written.

While the recounting of the history of chocolate along with a complete step-by-step perusal of the journey from bean to bar may offer compelling enough reason to purchase this book, I think the chapters on tasting the different qualities of that sinful commodity even more coersive. Anyone who likes to use chocolate in their culinary creations, may find the variety of finer qualities of couverture daunting. Which to use when whipping up a delicate mousse or a flourless liquid center cake? What spices compliment and which deterioriate? Never fear--the author diligently answers all such queries by recounting a tasting procedure which explains color, flavor characterizations, desirable and undesirable aromas and texture to well-educate your palate while insuring your choice of a specific chocolate to fit your expectations. In addition, some twenty recipes are included to showcase the wide ranging possibilities of this food of the gods. From truffles to sachertorte, you cannot want for a more delicious palette of ideas to enhance your taste buds. The layout of the book is unsurpassed; the photos are as luscious as the subject, making it the perfect gift. Recommended to all those who enjoy discovering new things about things you already love. Also recommended to

compliment this book is the novel "The Discovery of Chocolate", which traces the history of chocolate from discovering its Aztec roots to the production of Hershey's chocolate bars as seen through the eyes of a miraculously slow-aging Spaniard of the 15th century. Delicious descriptions of sumptuous chocolate creations abound. Have a homemade hot chocolate ready to sip and savor while you read.

As a cacao researcher I find this New Taste... a well-thought and provocative introduction into the natural history of cacao for the casual eater, epicurean, and even beginning researchers. The various sections and references are topical as well as thoughtfully presented. Ms. Presilla really brings you in to the mystique as well as some lighter aspects of the science behind cacao and chocolate. Many people don't realize what good chocolate really is like! Ms. Presilla even helps you to develop the skills involved in tasting and evaluating chocolates similarly as you would with fine wines. And if you can't romance that special someone after wowing them with Fran Bigelow's Deep Chocolate Torte that is simple to make and out of this world- page 136(heavy cream, eggs, 1 lb of dark chocolate), you're not really trying!

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