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Like Winter For Chocolate

Lifelong Chocophile Kerstin Roos Raises The Bar on Chocolate Standards in Edmonton
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Kerstin's Chocolates

10139-112 St. www.kerstinschocolates.com

Edmonton chocolatier Kerstin Roos fondly remembers a certain chocolate from her youth overseas—a light, crunchy, cereal-like confection that couldn't be found on this side of the Atlantic. "There was always in the back of my head," she says, "an idea to make some kind of chocolate confectionery that I had when I was growing up that wasn't available in Canada." Recently Roos set to work, trying to recreate an organic version of that childhood treat.



Meryl Lawton

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Roos always intended to share her ideas about chocolate with Canadians. Upon completing an apprenticeship at New York chocolate maker Sweet Bliss, Roos began selling her chocolate at various farmers' markets in New York City. Soon after that, Roos and her family found themselves in Edmonton, where she began to expose Canadians to the same chocolates she had fallen in love with.

She started out with an online business to distribute her favourite chocolates in the city. "I always knew I wanted to make chocolate here eventually," she explains, "but I had to wait until I got my commercial kitchen set up." Now open, the new shop where Roos makes chocolate is a sweet facility with a welcoming storefront. In addition to the bright new shop, Roos distributes her signature brand, Chocophilia, to more than two dozen specialty shops all over western Canada. The bars have been met with great fanfare, no doubt attributable to Roos' commitment to quality and responsible purchasing standards.

"I like to support chocolate makers that have a strong connection to the plantations where the chocolate is grown," she says. "The companies [I deal with] put more money back into the plantation." This is especially important nowadays, she adds, when people are increasingly aware about where the products they consume originate. The drying and fermenting is done in the country where the beans are grown—those steps are really important and they can make or break the quality of the chocolate."

Roos then pairs each chocolate with complementary flavours: a spicy bar with earthy Ecuadorean chocolate, for instance, or a bar with olive oil that Roos says would be appropriate for the beginning of a meal, spread on a piece of bread, rather than dessert. "It's almost as though [chocolate] is a medium for other spices and other flavours," Roos says.

The obvious potential for cavities aside, Roos wants to promote the healthy aspects of chocolate. She'll soon be releasing a bar made with Alberta-grown hemp seeds, for instance, full of healthy proteins and omega-3 fatty acids.

I left my visit to Kerstin's Chocolates with four of her handmade artisan bars in tow. I tried the Cocoa Bean, which is 65 per cent cocoa with pieces of fresh, raw cocoa throughout; the Hot Chocolate, a high cocoa Ecuadorean chocolate with spicy cayenne pepper; the Fleur de Sel milk chocolate bar with natural sea salt; and the Lemon Dream white chocolate bar with pieces of organic candied lemon, a favourite at this year's Rocky Mountain Food and Wine Festival.

For Valentine's Day, Roos suggests the Valentine's Day Chocolate Collection, containing two Chocophilia bars, a can of Chocolate Caviar, and a gourmet chocolate fondue kit for two, all for \$25.95. A truly sweet deal.

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by Chris Lewis

Shots For The Heart

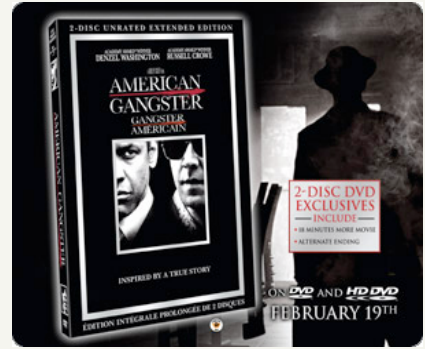
the perfect Valentine's Day wines, whether you're dining out, eating bonbons, or drinking yourself
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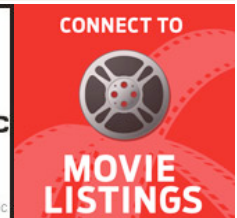
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