



that he had learned in France. He crafts everything from desserts such as bitter chocolate mousse and raspberry crème brûlée to his signature chocolates and truffles.

"I'm not into making honey-blossom-pollen-flavored whatever; that's not me," he says. "Americans don't really understand that. I do easily identifiable flavors, like cookies and cream or a caramel, but executed perfectly and so unbelievably beautiful you can't wait to put it in your mouth."

Together, Love's 6,000-sq.-ft. manufacturing facility and chocolate shop in Fort Myers and his smaller Naples store employ 45 people, who crank out between 40,000 and 50,000 handmade pieces a day during season, although Love says, "A lot don't make the final cut." His production manager not only has a degree in art, pottery and sculpting, but also has studied the culinary arts. Others on his staff also have art and culinary backgrounds. "Dessert is a great way to express art," Love says. "I encourage them to be creative, and I empower them to do what they do best."

- **Prices:** Chocolates run from \$13 for a five-piece box to \$95 for a 50-piece box.

- **Stumbling block:** "I've been working on a coffee-and-doughnut-flavored chocolate for three years but can't get it right. The coffee part is easy, but the doughnut is tough."

- **Future (sugar) shock:** A gelateria is in the works for the space next door to his Fort Myers flagship store.

➔ **NORMAN LOVE, 51**

Norman Love Confections / Fort Myers, Naples

Norman Love spent 12 years traveling 42 weeks a year as corporate executive pastry chef for Ritz-Carlton, overseeing the brand's global pastry and baking operations. "What I learned in my travels is that people eat with their eyes first," he says.

When he and his wife decided to open their own business 10 years



ago, the visual aspect of his premium chocolates and confections was as much a priority as the taste and quality. "It used to be that dessert meant a piece of cake plopped on a plate," says Love. "But I learned the importance of turning it into an architectural, artistic expression, and I wanted to give Americans the oh-my-God-wow factor at the table. And, of course, taste is of primary importance."

Love applied techniques for decorating and coloring cocoa butters

DESIGN: READERS CHOICE

As part of its architecture and design feature, FLORIDA TREND asked readers to submit examples of good design in a number of areas. The examples selected for the Readers Choice section range from a cradle designed for use in homeless shelters to a reception desk at a Miami Beach hotel to backyard sheds designed to fit into historic neighborhoods. You can see our Readers Choice selections at FloridaTrend.com/Links.



Garden shed by Historic Shed



Solaris canopy by Bamboobarry