

## CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES



My wife doesn't eat dessert, and doesn't have much interest in cookies or candy. But when we dine at Sea Salt, an excellent restaurant in Naples, Florida, she always ends her meal with a sweet from the selection of chocolates offered—specifically the Tahitian Caramel, made with vanilla-scented caramel coated in milk chocolate. There must be hundreds and hundreds of makers of artisanal chocolates in America, but the array produced by Norman Love Confections, based not far from Naples in Fort Myers, are something special enough to tempt even a savory-tooth like that of my wife. *Consumer Reports* agrees, rating Love one of the top three chocolate companies in America.

Love learned pastry-making and confectionery in France, worked for the Beverly Hills Hotel, and then began an association with the Ritz-Carlton hotel chain as corporate executive pastry chef, opening thirty pastry kitchens for them, everywhere from Boston to Bali. In 2001, he left Ritz-Carlton and he and his wife, Mary, went into

the chocolate business. Today, he sells his wares out of shops in Fort Myers and Naples as well as from his Web site. He also does a line of specialty chocolates for Godiva's "G" Collection. An innovator in chocolate-making techniques, Love has developed a technology for shell-molded chocolates that is widely used across the industry.

His chocolates are often vividly colored and always vivid on the palate. The flavorings are intense and pure, whether they're made with nothing but chocolate, like those from his single-origin Black collection (his remarkable Venezuela chocolate tastes like licorice and black tea and prune, without any of those things actually added), or enhanced with jalapeño pepper, passion fruit, ginger lime, or Florida orange. Love's truffles are particularly good. I don't know if I've ever had a better example than his dark chocolate cream, which is buttery and bittersweet. It's the kind of truffle you want to devour, but force yourself to savor slowly, just to make it last.