

The Dish

Savory Chocolates

Chocolates have long been a preferred sweet for the sweet. But what about chocolates with savory surprises tucked inside? This year, thanks to some adventurous Northern New England chocolatiers, you can celebrate Valentine's Day with bonbons whose taste is as complex—and irresistible—as romance itself. —Mimi Bigelow Steadman

Tavernier Chocolates

"Chocolate has much more flexibility than people give it credit for having," says Dar Tavernier-Singer, who is always experimenting. Among her sweet-savory combos are a rich blue cheese-chocolate pâté and miniature pyramids of bitter chocolate blended with avocado and Mayan spices. The earthiness of her Forage Collection comes from cream infused with maitake mushrooms and Italian truffle oil. Tavernier-Singer even folds fermented black garlic into chocolate ganache. 74 Cotton Mill Hill, A124, Brattleboro, Vermont. (802) 257-5806; tavernierchocolates.com.

My Brigadeiro

Traditionally made with condensed milk, cocoa powder, and butter, the little orbs of smooth, dense chocolate called *brigadeiros* are "as common as cupcakes" in Brazil, says Paula Alexandrescu, who grew up eating them in Rio de Janeiro. Now, she takes these truffle-like treats to the next level by using imaginative ingredients to create a wide variety of flavors. The Wicked Hot is kicked up with ground chile pepper before being showered with toasted organic coconut. 44 S. Main Street, Hanover, New Hampshire. (603) 277-2187; mybrigadeiro.com.

Dean's Sweets

What do you get when you cross a milk chocolate candy bar with Maine-made Fox Family Potato Chips? Possibly the best mash-up of sweet and salty ever. Unless you prefer your saltiness bacon-flavored, in which case you should go straight for the bacon-buttercrunch, a dark-chocolate disk containing butter toffee and, yes, bacon. "We use preservative-free bacon from Tennessee," says owner Dean Bingham. "It's salty, peppery, and smoky." Savory elements also lurk in some of the shop's truffles. Choices include cayenne pepper, cherry-chipotle, and chèvre-lemon-apricot. 475 Fore Street, Portland. (207) 899-3664; deanssweets.com.

Forage Collection

