

Seasonal, Savory Xocolatl

It may seem odd to talk about chocolate in July, a topic usually reserved for pre-Valentine's marketing, or December's holiday food frenzy. But with the philosophy of chocolatier David Brigg of Xocolatl de David, artisan chocolates are always in season.

And with the changing of the seasons, Brigg's fruit and chocolate preserves rotate. All fruits are sourced directly from growers, like Winters Farm just outside of Portland in Troutdale, Oregon. When rhubarb is deep fuchsia and strawberries are at their peak of ripeness, Briggs macerates these two fruits with sugar and makes preserves. Melted Felchlin chocolate, a premium Swiss brand, is added, and the flavor of the condiment is adjusted with salt and Sherry vinegar for the rhubarb, balsamic with the strawberries.

His fruit and chocolate preserves are made to be fruit-forward, and not too sweet. They can be used as an accoutrement to a country pâté, or spread over pancakes, a delicious topping for an ice cream sundae, and lovely with yogurt or toast at breakfast.

Last week, Briggs introduced artisan chocolate bars in three savory flavors: Piment d'Espelette, a dried chile pepper from the Basque region of France; Almond and Pimenton made with marcona almonds fried in olive oil and smoky Spanish paprika; and Salted Caramel with artisan sea salt and gooey, rich caramel laced throughout the bar.

This inclination toward the savory side of chocolate is apparent throughout the Xocolatl line—a reflection of Briggs's stint as sous chef at landmark Portland restaurant, Park Kitchen. Clustered crumbles of crisp bacon speckle his signature dark chocolate ganache truffles. Sharp Baley Hazen Blue cheese, filling this same 72% dark chocolate shell, is a surprising delight, but according to his blog, it's scientifically proven to be a winning combination based on research done by legendary British chef, Heston Blumenthal.

Another novel creation is his Roasted White Chocolate Truffles. He bakes white chocolate on low heat to caramelize the sugars and milk solids, transforming this mundane confection into a roasty, toasty, nutty delight that tastes deeper and earthier—a technique passed down from Valrona's chocolatiers.

Xocolatl de David can be found at a handful of Portland gourmet shops and restaurants. For a complete list of retail locations, visit xocolatldedavid.com. Soon, David will open his online store for shipping across the country.