

Daphne Merkin: The Sex-Over-50 Problem Jon Mooallem: Why Eat a Whole Piece of Fruit?

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The Republican Loner

Chuck Hagel is a war-criticizing, anti-abortion, slash-the-deficit, multilateralist conservative.

Is that what it takes to be president?

By Joseph Lelyveld



The Sweet-Tooth Fairy

If Chloé Doutre-Roussel has her way, bad chocolate will be on its way out.



HAUTE CHOCOLATE

A recipe for hot chocolate (featured on the next page) from Chloé Doutre-Roussel's friend Ingrid Astier includes hints of pepper, licorice, cinnamon and ginger.

Sure you love chocolate. But do you store dated bars in your cellar and wake up at 5 in order to taste them with a fresh palate? Do you wear custom-made dresses with pockets in the front so you can nibble during meetings? Did Pierre Hermé name five cocoa-based confections after you? Then sorry, you've got nothing on Chloé Doutre-Roussel.

In chocolate circles — yes, they exist — the twinkly Frenchwoman is a goddess, its Bella Abzug, Julia Child and Isabelle Huppert foil-wrapped into one. A tireless enthusiast for the stuff (what's known in France as a *chocodépendante*), the former agronomist has parlayed her passion into a very sweet career. As the chocolate buyer and taster for Fortnum & Mason since 2003, she has worked her way through more than a pound of samples daily. ("I spit," she admitted.) Later this year, she will also become a consultant for the store while honing her business plan. The objective is to bring her chocolate revolution to America — a movement that's already under way thanks to independent chocolatiers like Michael Recchiuti,

Photographs by Tony Cenicola



Some of the world's best confections owe their brilliance to the guidance of Chloé Doutre-Roussel, shown with cocoa pod in hand.

Dagoba, Steve De Vries and Scharffen Berger (which was recently bought by Hershey).

In the coming year Doutre-Roussel will conduct her chocolate-tasting classes and conferences here, with dreams of someday revamping the selection at a major U.S. supermarket chain and broadcasting a regular informative sweet spot on TV. "Americans have to learn that chocolate is a gourmet food with their body and not just because they read it everywhere," she explains.

The revolution begins tomorrow, when she takes over the Charbonnel et Walker Chocolate Cafe at Saks Fifth Avenue in New York for two days to lead tastings and sign copies of her book, "The Chocolate Connoisseur." A breathily written, lightly edited manual to taking your relationship past the flirtation phase, the book also marks the debut of the Chloé Chocolat line. For if Doutre-Roussel has her way, those 70 percent Lindt bars that we smugly keep in our desk drawers are going to taste to us like sweetened crayons. Soon we'll be seeking small-production chocolate whose aromas of mushrooms, wood, jasmine and leather can linger on the tongue for up to five minutes.

Doutre-Roussel, who weighs a smidge over 100 pounds, speaks of the sweet in near-mystical terms; "choco-" is her favorite prefix. "Chocolate is like my best friend and the most intense pleasure at the same time," she says, clarifying, "perhaps not the most intense, but the most regular and reliable one." Her path began at 3 weeks old in Mexico, where her mother put chocolate on her lips and told her she smiled like an angel. Sent to Paris to attend high school, she used her pocket money to buy as many new bars as she could and made rigorous tasting notes before breakfast. Years later, she landed in the office of Pierre Hermé, who was revitalizing the fabled patisserie Ladurée. "Nobody speaks, cats, breathes chocolate like you," he told her less than a year later when he promoted her to confectionery manager. (He wasn't kidding: this is a woman who has kept rooms in her apartment at 65 degrees, the ideal temperature for storing chocolate.)

At Fortnum & Mason, she tried to wean Brits off of sugary truffles and low-quality bars (mere "candy" to her) and toward what she believes is the real deal: dark chocolate bars made with care and enjoyed without guilt. (A chapter of her book is dedicated to alleviating chocolate-induced anxiety, since she says she believes that it triggers enzymes in the saliva that make things taste bitter.) Part of Doutre-Roussel's role as chocoambassador involves dispelling the snobbish myths that have arisen as chocolate has become the new cheese. "Some say that people who like milk chocolate are not real connoisseurs or that percentage is crucial to the

Ingrid's Spicy Hot Chocolate

½ vanilla bean	1 pinch licorice powder (optional)
2 cups whole milk	3½ ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
2 tablespoons mineral or filtered water	4 teaspoons Scharffen Berger natural cocoa powder
1 pinch ground ginger	1 to 2 teaspoons sugar
1 pinch cinnamon	3 tablespoons heavy cream.
1 pinch black pepper	

1. Split the vanilla bean in half lengthwise, scrape out the seeds and place the seeds and pod in a medium saucepan. Add the milk, water and spices and bring to a simmer over medium-low heat. Whisk in the chocolate and cocoa powder until melted. Add the sugar to taste and then the cream. Let cool for 45 minutes.
2. To serve, remove the vanilla pod, return to the stove and whisk over low heat until frothy and warm. *Serves 4. Adapted from "The Chocolate Connoisseur."*

Chocolate Financiers

Vegetable oil	¼ cup plus 2 teaspoons flour
9 tablespoons unsalted butter	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon finely ground almonds
1½ ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped	1 tablespoon plus ½ teaspoon finely ground pistachios
1 vanilla bean	4 egg whites.
1 cup confectioners' sugar	

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Grease a financier mold (tops of mold should measure approximately 1½ by 3¾ inches), madeleine mold or small muffin tin with vegetable oil and place on a baking sheet. If you use individual molds, you'll need 14.
2. Melt the butter over medium-low heat, stirring often, until it turns amber and smells nutty; keep warm. Melt the chocolate in a double boiler over low heat and keep warm. Split the vanilla bean in half lengthwise and scrape out the seeds. Set both the pod and seeds aside.
3. In a large bowl, sift together the sugar and flour. Add the almonds and pistachios and mix with a wooden spoon. Add the egg whites, vanilla pod and seeds and stir vigorously. Strain a quarter of the warm butter over the mixture and stir to combine. Strain in the remaining butter and mix well; then stir in the melted chocolate. Let the batter cool to room temperature. Remove the vanilla pod. (The batter will hold in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.)
4. Pour the batter almost to the top of the molds. Bake for 12 to 13 minutes; rotate the pan after 6 minutes. Let cool slightly on the baking sheet and then transfer from the mold to a baking rack. *Makes 14 financiers. Adapted from Chloé Doutre-Roussel.*

quality or even the origin of the beans," she says, referring to the status appeal of single-estate bars from Venezuela, Madagascar and other tropical climes. Pooh-poohing percentagism, she adds, "When you buy wine, do you select the bottle according to the percentage of alcohol?"

What people need to do in order to understand the power of good chocolate, she says, is a taste test. She instructs students to let a fingernail-size piece dissolve on the tongue and take note of the flavors that emerge. By sampling four artisanal brands of chocolate of the same percentage (which can be ordered through Web sites like Chocosphere.com) alongside a bar of your favorite supermarket chocolate, you can build "a database of available chocopleasure."

Her "desert island bars" — including Valrhona Manjari, Pralus Madagascar and Steve De Vries Costa Rican Trinitario — are included in her limited-edition Journey Into Chocolate box, sold by Fortnum & Mason and promoted through her Web site, Chloechocolat.com. Next, she plans to make customized accessories available through the site. "Everybody has little pockets for the mobile, and I think we should also have one for a chocolate bar," she says. *Chocodépendants*, unite. ■