

GIMME GIMME CHOC TREATMENT

daniel evans gets stuck in to some very
fancy-looking chocolate bars.

PHOTOGRAPH KY WEBB

BAHEN & CO. ALMOND AND SEA SALT This dainty bar arrives in a wrapper that looks like one of your nanna’s bedspreads. But don’t be fooled. Underneath – encased in seductive gold foil – lies something altogether more racy: a delicate slab of choc flaked with toasty almonds and pungent sea salt. Each bite is something of a gamble and with each chew you find yourself hoping you’ll hit another nugget of crunchy salt. Admittedly, this can (and, er, did) incite some feverish behaviour. So much so, there was little left to share. Or none. Sorry. There’s no minding your Ps and Qs when this old girl’s around.

WILLIE’S CACAO DARK CHOCOLATE WITH GINGER AND LIME Willie Harcourt-Cooze is a young English fellow who heeded the call of adventure and followed his spirit animal (or similar) to a hacienda in the Venezuelan cloud forest, where he began harvesting cacao. He’s slogged from the eastern tip of Cuba to the mountains of Peru in search of rare and exotic brown stuff. But this ginger and lime treat is crafted with beans from the Kailahun District of Sierra Leone, which makes sense because it’s like a safari – in your mouth. Chunks of ginger heat up the tongue, making for a faster melt, until all that’s left are delicious fragments of lime and a smooth swill of impeccable choc.

ALTER ECO DARK COCONUT TOFFEE There’s nothing quite like blowing the calorie count and saving the Amazon all in one bite. And guess what, lardy pants – you don’t even have to leave the comfort of your couch. (Well, you’ll have to go down the shop and buy a chocolaty treat, but after that: couch.) Each block of Alter Eco helps Peruvian farmers swap crops of cocaine for cacao and assists in replenishing the rainforest canopy, thereby sucking up a crapload of Co2. This milky-tasting, climate-changing bar is speckled with fine coconut and golden grains of toffee, and the 47% cocoa makes for a batter of buttery goodness.

PANA CHOCOLATE NUTS Good news for vegans: this contains no dairy, no soy, no gluten and no refined sugars. Bad news for vegans (and every other person): it also contains no flavour. This is chocolate in sheep’s clothing. Or a wolf in chocolate clothing. Whichever makes sense. Something’s not right, anyway. There’s no indulgence here, just finely whipped nuts, cinnamon and – *hard

swallow* – carob. As a result, the texture is soft and doughy – apart from some patches of unground nuts – and the taste has notes of ash and washing powder. The label claims to be nature’s super food, but it tastes super gross.

SIMON COLL XOCOLATERS XOCOLATA A LA PEDRA This hefty bar of dark chocolate is not for the faint of heart, weak of teeth or slack of jaw. Hard, impenetrable and smoky, the only thing more offensive than the chocolate is the packaging, which boasts an 1880 frieze of native workers ploughing a plantation for beans and sugar. Um, hurrah for exploitation? I imagine this might be an after-dinner hit amongst extremely hardy outdoors types (BYO machete to carve the bloody thing), or perhaps white supremacist groups pining for the days of slavery. Though on second thoughts, it might stain their robes. In short: not that appetising.

CHOCOLATE AND LOVE CHOCOLATE WITH MILK AND CACAO NIBS Two things: 1) Isn’t “chocolate and love” a tautology? 2) Despite initial presumption, it turns out cacao nibs are not the same thing as chocolate chips. Nibs are the crunchy and bitter cousins of chips and they course through this velvety bar like a delicious nutty undercurrent. Made with extra milk, this molten slab is nothing short of a chocolate river, and that makes you Augustus Gloop. Just like Herr Gloop, the danger is that this choc enters mouth and stomach with such little fuss, the whole block might escape its colourful packaging completely undetected. Chances are you won’t end up stuck in a pipe, though. Which is good.

LOVING EARTH ORGANIC ORANGE AND GUBINGE RAW DARK CHOCOLATE To be honest, a clear conscience never tasted so dirty. This tastes like soil. Or, more specifically, the soil you might find underneath an orange tree. The recycled brown packaging espouses words like “healthy”, “sustainable” and “fair”, but nowhere will you find the word “delicious”. The whole thing reeks of a parent trying to disguise vegetables in their child’s spaghetti. Bonus points for trying, though: the bar is smattered with a North Australian super food called gubinge, supposedly the highest known natural source of Vitamin C on the planet, and sweetened (I use the term loosely) with organic evaporated coconut nectar. ✱