

FRESH

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Bahen & Co has returned to time-honoured traditions.



It's all about the beans

WA chocolate makers are helping to lead a revolution

Chocolate is going back to basics, with artisan producers leading the push. It's about single origin, terroir and small-batch roasting to capture the individual flavours and nuances of beans.

Unlike chocolatiers, who melt and blend couverture, Bahen & Co, in Wilyabrup, and Gabriel, in Yallingup, are chocolate makers who start from scratch.

"We import fermented and dried beans and roast to the profile we want," says Gabriel

Myburgh, who was a lawyer for a WA insurance company before shifting his family of six to set up the Caves Road chocolate factory last year. "The idea is to show people that cocoa, like wine, has a particular flavour profile, depending on where it's grown."

Gabriel's 85g bars won a swag of medals at this year's Royal Melbourne Fine Food awards and come in 12 varieties, including a Java criollo with a

smoky, almost tobacco finish, a citrusy Madagascar, a full-flavoured Ecuador and a sweet milk foretero from Ghana. Each batch is limited to 250 bars and packaging is luxe.

For a serious fix, try the Venezuelan chuao in a 100 per cent cocoa bar with barely a hint of vanilla. "Surprisingly, it's popular and we always sell out," Mr Myburgh says. Even more surprisingly, the chocolate is not bitter and almost creamy.

Bahen & Co, in Margaret River, uses only two ingredients — cocoa and cane sugar — in its artisan line made from "heirloom" beans grown in pockets of non-hybridised plantations that have survived modern

plant-breeding practices. One taste and you're hooked.

Maybe it's the beans, or the slow fermentation process and solar drying, or time-honoured roasting, winnowing, stone grinding, conching and tempering on antique and vintage equipment from Italy, Spain and Central America, where chocolate began. The winnower was recovered from an abandoned chocolate factory in Latin America.

"We're one of only a handful of producers globally using these traditional methods and two ingredients," says oenologist Josh Bahen, who spent 10 years making small-batch cabernet at Moss Wood.

"There is nowhere to hide with such a process. Defects cannot be masked or processed out. The bean, essentially, does the talking.

"These heirloom varieties make up less than 5 per cent of the world's remaining cacao and grow in some of the most remote corners of the planet."

Focus is on grower-direct trade to build relationships with farmers, many of whom have never tasted chocolate. As part of the feedback system, Mr Bahen sends them the finished product to try.

"It's been an interesting journey," he says. "Creating chocolate with a sense of place and a connection to the farm is really what drive us. We want people to understand that this chocolate springs from an exotic fruit, with each bar creating its own semi-wild signature that speaks of its terroir."



Bahen & Co uses only two ingredients — cocoa and cane sugar — in its artisan range.

Chocolate heaven

Chocolate lovers can get their fix at a new artisan chocolatier in Shenton Park. London-trained Sue Lewis has just opened her small shop where she makes her bespoke truffles on a marble slab using Valrhona, Kennedy & Wilson and Bahen couverture.

The range contains fresh fruit and very little sugar, so it has a short shelf life. There are no common additives such as fructose and glucose. Top seller is the buttery salted caramel in a dark chocolate shell, but you can't go past the festive treats this time of year, including vanilla snowballs, Christmas pudding blended with Caribbean dark chocolate, Pimm's cocktail truffles and 12-year-old Glenlivet single malt truffles for whisky connoisseurs.

Sue Lewis Artisan Chocolatier: 44 Derby Road, Shenton Park



Picture: Red Tiki

There are four 75g hand-moulded bars in the range, all 70 per cent cocoa, including a Madagascar, a Brazil and one with sea salt, roast almonds and extra virgin olive oil. A Papua New Guinea bar and an Ecuador bar are under the track. Packaging, designed by Mr Bahen's wife, Jacq, is inspired by the couple's journeys to chocolate lands. **Olga de Moeller**



Award-winner Gabriel makes 12 varieties of chocolate.

Our talented columnist Rob Broadfield will not be putting pen to paper this week because he is away on holidays.

In last week's Fresh we incorrectly printed the price for Bistro Guillaume's New Year's Eve three-course dinner. The correct price is \$295 per person. To book phone 9362 7551. We apologise for the inconvenience.

100 best cakes & desserts

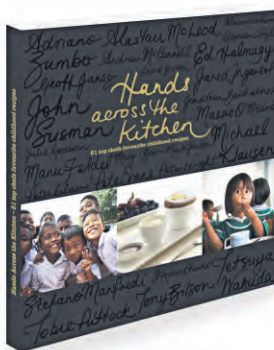


WIN
We have a copy of 100 best cakes & desserts for one lucky reader

Books for cooks

100 best cakes & desserts Gabriel Gate. Hardie Grant Books, hard cover. \$39.95
French-born, adopted Aussie chef Gabriel Gate's latest offering features all things sweet, from traditional French desserts such as floating islands and tarte tartin to the everyday basics of dessert cooking; pastry, sauces and sorbet. Seasonal fruit features strongly throughout which is no surprise considering Gate spent his childhood living among a fruit orchard watching his grandmother put the fruit to good use in cakes, tarts and crepes. Recipes are easy to follow and most feature beautiful photographs which will tempt even the most strong-willed. If you love entertaining or simply have a sweet tooth this book will be a welcome addition to your collection.

Hands Across the Kitchen Focus Creative/Hands Across the Water, soft cover. \$34.95
Fifty-one chefs from around Australia share their favourite childhood recipes in this book with proceeds from its sale going to Hands Across the Water, a charity that supports Thai orphans and their communities, founded in the wake of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. This eclectic collection of recipes has blackcurrant lollies by patissier Adriano Zumbo, chicken karage by Tetsuya Wakuda (Tetsuya's Sydney) and "perfect" roast chicken by Maggie Beer (food author, restaurateur). Perth chef Stephen Clarke



(Clarke's of North Beach) makes an appearance with his pork fillet, pancetta and honey roasted vegetables. The book features childhood photos and memories recounted by each chef as well as stories and photographs of the communities the charity supports.

Divine Vegan Desserts Lisa Fabry. Wakefield Press, soft cover. \$24.95
Dessert is something to celebrate and not feel guilty about in this collection



of wholesome recipes, which sees sugar swapped for agave nectar, wholemeal flour instead of white, coconut oil for butter and even the addition of vegetables in the most unlikely places. Along with all recipes being vegan (no animal products used at all), a colour-coded key on each recipe denotes whether the dessert is gluten free, wheat free, raw, low sugar or nut free. There is also a selection of vegan recipes from cafes and restaurants around the world. No one will believe you when you tell them your delicious batch of double fudge pecan brownies has no eggs, no butter and, in fact contains sweet potato.

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Fresh is giving away a copy of Gabriel Gate's latest book. Simply write your name, number and address on the back of an envelope and send to Fresh 100 Best Cakes competition, GPO Box 2909, Perth, WA 6800. Entries close at 5pm on January 3 with the winner drawn the same day. Employees of The West Australian and immediate family ineligible to enter. See WAN privacy policy at the west.com.au/privacypolicy.