

Cocoa-lossal!

Who needs to travel to Belgium when some of the world's greatest chocolate experiences are right here? **Chris Sheedy** brings you our top 10 chockie choices.

Lindt Chocolat Cafe

53 Martin Place and 104 Cockle Bay Wharf, 8257 1600

For those who love to be surrounded by quality chocolate in all its forms, and to be faced by way too many choices for one sitting, this is your dream come true. The two Lindt Chocolat Cafes which, perhaps not surprisingly, are constantly packed with chocolate addicts, serve hot chocolates and chocolate milkshakes that will make you go weak at the knees (perhaps because of your expanding girth?) as well as dreamy cakes, ice creams, sundaes, coffees, pralines and truffles. But why stop there? There's also a monthly Chocolate Appreciation Course on the second Tuesday evening of each month - don't miss out!

Redoak Boutique Beer Cafe

201 Clarence Street Sydney, 9262 3303

What's a beer cafe got to do with chocolate? Well, the amazing range of stunning beers from the Redoak microbrewery includes a "Belgium Chocolate Stout" and a "Belgium Choc-Cherry Stout". Far from being gimmick beers, these smooth, rich and velvety oatmeal stouts are infused with high-quality Belgian chocolate, adding an unforgettable full-bodied intensity to the stout experience. While you're there, don't miss the beer chocolate truffles, including the Wee Heavy Ale & Dark Chocolate Truffle and the Framboise & White Chocolate Truffle With Hazelnuts.

Chocolate Espresso Tours

Web: www.chocolateespresso.com.au

If there's one thing better than a chocolate feast it's the chance to walk off the extra kilojoules, which means you can eat more at the next stop. Hence this brilliant idea - a variety of coffee and chocolate walking tours that guide you to Sydney's many hidden specialist stores offering exquisite chocolate experiences. Each tour costs \$49 and lasts about two-and-a-half hours, starting from Martin Place or the Museum of Sydney. Covering various regions of the CBD and the retail district, you'll also gain some fascinating historical knowledge about the introduction of coffee and chocolate into Australia.

Haigh's Chocolates

Shop 1, The Strand Arcade, 9221 6999

Founded in Mt Gambier in 1905 and soon after that in

Adelaide, Haigh's Chocolates expanded to Melbourne before finally arriving in Sydney. The company's long history, and the fact that its chocolate wizards mix Swiss chocolate making skills with Australian know-how, means Haigh's is pretty much the closest thing we Australians have to chocolate royalty. From presentation boxes to single chocolates, from hard centres to dark truffles, from fruit liqueurs to hazelnut praline wafer bars, if you can't find something you like here then you just don't like chocolate.

Mondo Chocolate Fountain

Web: www.mondochocfountain.com.au

It could be the ultimate chocolate indulgence. Who needs a chocolate bar when you can have an entire fountain of warm, molten chocolate? Try this on your own and, well, you're probably going to make yourself ill, but they're perfect for a party. Rental prices start at \$599 for the fountain, the chocolate and a kilogram of marshmallows. The chocolate is a rich, gourmet Belgian chocolate, and it goes perfectly with marshmallows, fruit, biscuits, breads and even some vegies. In fact, it could be the perfect way to make the kids eat their greens.

Max Brenner

Web: www.maxbrenner.com.au

Max Brenner stores are popping up all over Sydney, luring passers-by into their molten, sticky webs with purely evil chocolate temptations. From disgracefully rich hot chocolates and shakes to truffles, pralines, chocolate-covered nuts, caramelised pistachios, Belgian waffles, cakes and even chocolate pizza, these altars to chocolate have attracted a devout band of followers, and it's easy to see why. The choice of chocolate is stunning, and you can even order your hot chocolate in a particular regional style, such as Italy's typically thick, sludgy version, or a Mexican hot choc with chilli and cinnamon.

Colefax Chocolates

Web: www.colefaxchocolates.com.au

With outlets in Haberfield and Waverley, Colefax Chocolates is serving the food-mad eastern suburbs and inner west with some of the highest-quality handmade chocolate in Australia. Using only the finest Belgian couverture chocolate, which has a minimum of 32 per cent cocoa butter, the artisans at Colefax have a serious obsession with high-quality

sweets. Perhaps this is why they supply products to many of the city's hotels, as well as several air

Vanderwee Choco

Web: www.vanderwee.com.au

If you absolutely insist on chocolate from Belgium, which is undoubtedly the best in the world, then don't despair. Vanderwee is the importer of Belgian chocolate to Sydney. For an extra cost it offers an efficient delivery service. Praline gift boxes filled with a broad range of treats, and considering they're imported from Belgium, the prices are only a little more than chocolate, which is less than you'd expect from Brussels.

Belle Fleur

658 Darling Street, 9221 6999

Here's a chocolate store that's got its wares in their tracks. In a beautiful, incredible display cabinet overlooking a chocoholic's heaven, a selection of tastes and designs, without preservatives, colourings, pralines, truffles, freshly whipped delights, hard centres, soft centres can't make up your mind, praline Fleur's chocolate makers have been for 20 years, draw on four generations and only use the finest quality ingredients. This sort of passion and dedication is difficult to say no.

Kimberley Chocolates

209 Lilyfield Road, Leichhardt, 9221 6999

You're not a true chocoholic until you've developed a great reputation. Kimberley Chocolates evenings at Leichhardt's Kimberley Chocolates not only will you get to taste various types of chocolate, you'll also be taught about the chocolate making process, the not only as a sweet but also as a business. You'll have the chance to experience different types of chocolate and may even discover your own talents! Cost is \$55 per person, which is essential.