



Chocolate Lover's Guide

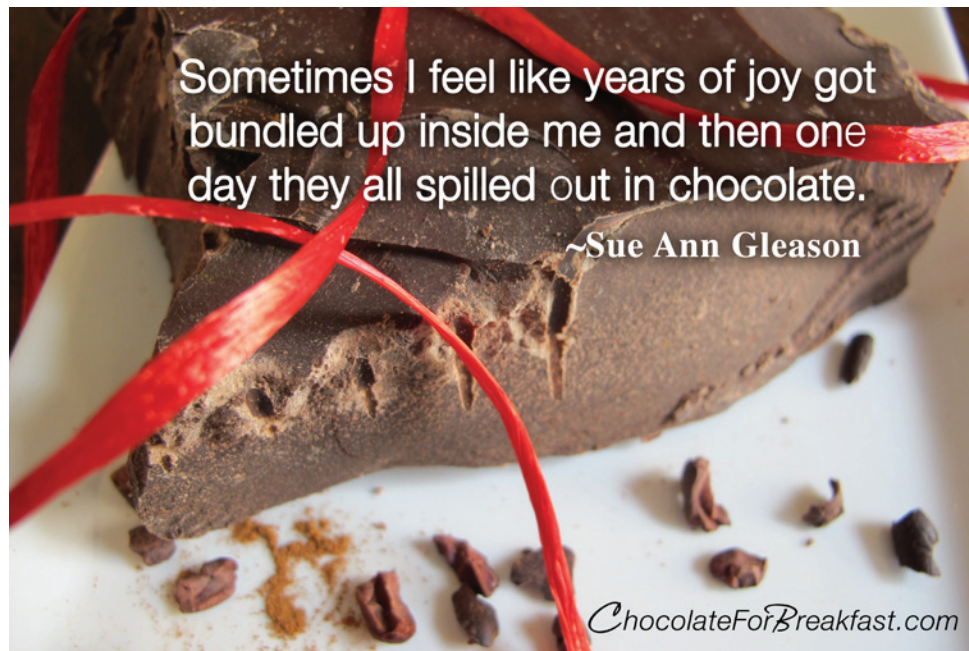
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It's been a while since I published my first little ebook, *Sue Ann's Top 12 Chocolate Finds*.

My palate has evolved considerably over the past year and a half. So, instead of updating my "Top 12 Chocolate Finds," I decided to change it up a bit.

In this guide you'll find:

- Some delectable recipes, a few of which were featured in the August 2012 issue of Oprah Magazine (woo hoo!)
- Some juicy tips for choosing chocolate
- My favorite chocolate places and spaces



Eat Only What You Can Savor *Begin with Chocolate*

True confession: my love affair with chocolate began with Little Debbie Nutty Bars. You know, those long wafer-like cookies filled with fake peanut butter and dipped in chocolate.

Yes, I loved those crunchy bars of peanut butter wonder.

Heck, I was a kid. What did I know about chocolate?

There wasn't a whole lot of chocolate in my childhood. My mother was on a perpetual diet and my grandmother, the cook in the family, had a proclivity for lemon. Lemon pie. Lemon cake. Lemon cookies. I suspect she was pining for the subtle scent of lemon trees that graced her childhood home in Sicily.

Chocolate showed up on Easter Sunday. I remember the year I woke up at the crack of dawn and rushed into the living room to see what the Easter Bunny had placed in my basket. There it was—a thick, creamy milk chocolate bunny, at least a foot tall, with crunchy candy eyes and a big pink satin ribbon tied around its sweet chocolaty neck. Baby blue Easter eggs, chewy gooey jellybeans, and dozens of foil-wrapped chocolate eggs surrounded him.

But, oh no, WAIT! What was happening to his backside? It was caving in, melting slowly in a blaze of sunlight streaming through the window.

I grew up in Buffalo, New York. Sunlight streaming through a window was a big deal. Snow was undoubtedly still on the ground. The Easter Bunny had probably arrived in a sleigh. I have a photograph of me in my purple lace Easter dress, sitting at the dining room table beside that disappearing bunny in a basket. My arms were folded across my chest. I wasn't about to eat THAT bunny.

No one messes with my chocolate. Not even Mr. Sun.

Fast-forward many years. I'm now a culinary nutritionist, and sugar is getting a bad rap. Everywhere you look you see books like Sugar Blues, Sugar Shock, Suicide by Sugar, The Sugar Addict's Total Recovery Program. And once again I'm thinking, "They'd better not mess with my chocolate."

Poor chocolate. This delectably sensuous treat has become the subject of so much controversy. First it's touted as the best superfood on the planet: antioxidant-rich, serotonin boosting, better than sex chocolate. "Yes, I'll have some of that!" But then, "Oh no, don't believe a word of it. Chocolate has caffeine. There are insect parts hiding in each and every bar."

What's a body to do with all this conflicting information?

Me? I'm a rebel at heart. I've studied with enough experts to know that scientists can make a

case for or against anything. I'm choosing to stay with those promoting the health benefits of chocolate.

Here's my take on cacao. It's an extraordinary superfood, rich in antioxidants and minerals. It doesn't have to be laden with sugar to taste delicious. In fact, the best chocolate I've sampled, other than the unadulterated nib, is generally about 70% cacao. The best products come from organic cacao beans, fairly traded, preferably from Madagascar.

But even more important than antioxidants and minerals, are the rich and satisfying experiences associated with chocolate. I've never met a cranky chocolate lover.

So the next time you reach for a piece of beautiful dark chocolate, listen to the snap when you break the bar in half. Arrange it on a plate. Smell the aroma of the cacao bean. Make sure to clear your palette so that you can appreciate all the subtly complex flavors. After you take a bite, sit with it a minute to see if there is a second rush of flavor on your palette or in your throat. Notice the crunch of the nibs when you're lucky enough to find a chocolatier who fancies those little crunchy wonders as much as you do.

Sometimes I put a piece of chocolate in my mouth and just let it melt, noticing every nuance as the flavor notes unfold. I encourage you to invest in the finest, purest chocolate you can acquire. Learn what it means to truly savor a treat. And the next time you're looking for a way to include a healthy dose of cacao in your diet, try my signature Chocolate for Breakfast Smoothie so that you, too, can enjoy a little guilt-free chocolate for breakfast.



Chocolate for Breakfast Smoothie

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 bananas (peeled, sliced and frozen)
- 2-3 leaves Swiss Chard (no stems)
- 8 oz filtered water
- 1 tablespoon raw cacao powder
- 1 tablespoon carob powder
- 1 tablespoon maca powder (optional)
- 1 cup frozen raspberries
- 1 ripe pear

METHOD:

Blend all of the above in a high-speed blender and enjoy every last drop.

Banana Pear Pudding w/Cacao Nib Clusters

(as seen in Oprah Magazine)

INGREDIENTS:

4 ripe pears
4 ripe bananas
cacao nibs
cacao nib clusters

METHOD:

Combine pears
and bananas in
high-speed blender.

Place pudding in small
bowls and top with a
cacao nibs and cacao nib
clusters for a real treat!



Choosing Chocolate

Of course I have my personal favorites but rather than telling you which bars to purchase, I'd like to show you what to look for in chocolate so that you can make an informed decision.

Consider the Source: Is it ethically sourced? Much of the commercial chocolate you find in the grocery store comes from slave labor. You want to keep your eyes wide open here. Not all chocolate is created equal. The questions I ask a chocolate maker are, "Where do you source your chocolate? Is it organic? Is it fair trade?"

Consider the Number: The percentage shown on many dark chocolate products refers to the percentage by weight of all ingredients derived from the cacao bean. The cocoa solids contribute flavor and the cocoa butter contributes the smooth texture.

So the percentage is really the percent of actual chocolate in the product. A higher percentage means more chocolate, and less of the remaining ingredients, primarily sugar. A higher percentage also means a more intense chocolate flavor.

There is No Joy in Soy: Soy lecithin isn't a necessary ingredient in chocolate. It allows manufacturers to more easily blend or "emulsify" ingredients that would otherwise behave like oil

and water. It also allows them to reduce the amount of cocoa butter in their chocolate bar and replace it with other vegetable fats in order to save money. That's reason enough to stay away from chocolate that has soy lecithin on the label.

Ditch the Dairy: Dairy binds with the antioxidants in chocolate and prevents them from nourishing your cells. If you want to get the best antioxidant bang for your buck, you want to invest in dairy-free dark chocolate. Yes, I have all kinds of science to support the benefits of including a beautiful piece of chocolate in your daily food repertoire.

But even more important than all of the buzzwords and phrases (gluten-free, soy-free, dairy-free, fair trade, antioxidant-rich, vegan), learn to appreciate the artistry and intention that goes into the crafting of chocolate that is

worth savoring.

Let Them Eat Cake



At a time when so many people are removing gluten from their diets it's nice to have a beautiful chocolate cake recipe that has no gluten and no gluten-free flour substitutes that are, in some cases, challenging to work with. I love this cake because it has a beautiful texture and the aroma of cinnamon and orange wafting through my kitchen makes for a delicious sensory experience.

Chocolate Polenta Pudding Cake

Adapted from The Italian Country Table (Scribner)

by Lynne Rossetto Kasper

6 to 8 servings

CAKE INGREDIENTS:

- 2 ½ cups whole milk (Yes, WHOLE milk, don't use low fat.)
- ¾ cup coarsely ground organic polenta corn grits (I use Bob's Red Mill.)
- ½ cup plus 3 tablespoons unrefined sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 4-oz. bars Ghirardelli bittersweet chocolate
- Shredded zest of ½ large organic orange
- 1 ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon (I use Vietnamese cinnamon.)
- Generous ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 4 large eggs, separated
- 1 tablespoon organic vanilla extract
- ½ cup organic heavy whipping cream

TOPPING INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon unsweetened raw cacao powder
- 1 tablespoon unrefined sugar
- Powdered sugar for dusting

METHOD:

In a 2-quart saucepan, bring the milk to a boil. Meanwhile, combine the cornmeal, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt in a medium metal bowl. Whisk in the hot milk until smooth.

Wash out the saucepan, fill it $\frac{2}{3}$ full of water, and bring it to a simmer. Cover the bowl with foil and set it over the simmering water (or use a double boiler). Cook 40 minutes, stirring frequently (at least 3 or 4 times) as it cooks. Add water to the pan if necessary. The polenta will be thick and stiff when it's finished.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350° F. Butter an 8-inch springform pan.

Finely chop $\frac{3}{4}$ of the chocolate and cut the rest into generous 1-inch pieces.

When the polenta is cooked, remove the bowl (or pan) from the water. Blend in the finely chopped chocolate, orange zest, cinnamon, pepper, egg yolks, and vanilla. Place 1 cup of this mixture in another bowl and stir the cream into it. Set aside.

In a large bowl, whip the egg whites until frothy. Beat in the remaining 3 tablespoons sugar, and then whip to soft peaks.

Fold $\frac{1}{4}$ of the whites into the non-cream chocolate-polenta mixture to lighten it. Then fold in the rest, leaving a few white streaks. Fold in the chocolate chunks with 1 or 2 strokes.

Pour $\frac{1}{2}$ of the batter into the prepared pan. Using a spoon, hollow out the center of the batter so the polenta-cream mixture will sit in a pocket, and add the cream mixture. Cover with the rest of the batter. Sift the cacao over the top, then sprinkle with unrefined sugar.

Bake 1 hour, or until a knife inserted at the edge of the pudding comes out with moist crumbs on it, but when placed into the center, comes out with creamy streaks. Cool on a rack for 15 minutes.

Release the sides of the pan and set the cake on a plate. Serve warm or at room temperature, dusted with powdered sugar.





Amazing Places & Spaces

*Piece, Love & Chocolate Company
in Boulder, Colorado*

Being a chocolate connoisseur is hard work. You have to think of new and creative ways to l-u-r-e your husband to cities where you're very likely to find bean to bar artisan chocolate makers. Chocolate makers who source high quality beans and then roast, crack, sort, winnow, grind, conch, and temper those beans in small batches, molding and packaging each bar lovingly by hand.

After that, you have to do a whole lot of negotiating to find ways to schedule a chocolate tasting experience into each and every day of your vacation. Oh, and you have to learn how to spell the word connoisseur.

We're a strange pair, my husband and I.

I travel across the country in search of exotic chocolates. He travels far and wide in search of good beer.

I ask, "Are your beans from the Criollo tree? Is your chocolate single origin, small batch, bean to bar?"

My husband talks IPA, vintage, and stout.

Boulder, Colorado is always a good bet. It has both beer *and* chocolate. I drop my beloved off at a local brewery while I visit my favorite chocolate shop.

Enter **Piece, Love, and Chocolate Company** and you feel like you are walking into a scene from the movie, *Chocolat*. Only better. This is no ordinary chocolate shop. It's a magical chocolate boutique with more chocolate than you can imagine, both edible and fanciful.

Sarah Amorese (aka Madame Chocolat) owns and operates this chocolate boutique. Sarah's mission is to enchant and entertain you and I am, indeed, enchanted each time I enter. Sarah is a professional chocolatier and pastry chef. She creates all of the house-made recipes based on experience, trends, art, and the science of chocolate. There is always something to sample and savor.

Genevieve Fetherston (aka Cocoa Coordinator) manages the kitchen and schedules the production of house-made chocolate goodies. I sit in rapt attention watching her create amazing confections: Salted Caramel Truffle Torte, Chocolate Carrot Cake, Chocolate Linzertorte. Okay, I'll stop.

In addition to its own special confections, **Piece, Love and Chocolate** showcases the crème de la crème of chocolates. They proudly offer an extensive and eclectic array of fine chocolates from around the world. I have sampled many, each with its own special characteristics and style.



More
Recipes



Raw Chocolate Sauce

Makes 2 cups

INGREDIENTS:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup almond milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cacao nibs

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces raw cacao powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup best quality agave nectar or pure maple syrup

5 Medjool dates, pitted and soaked

4 tablespoons vanilla extract

2 tablespoons extra virgin coconut oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt

METHOD:

Blend all ingredients (except coconut oil) until smooth, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add coconut oil and blend again for a rich, raw chocolate sauce.



*No-Bake Chocolate
Almond Oat Bars*

No-Bake Chocolate Almond Oat Bars

(as seen in Oprah Magazine)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup raw honey or maple syrup
- 1/4 cup virgin coconut oil
- 1/4 cup almond butter
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 cup organic rolled oats
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped raw almonds
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
- 1/4 cup raw organic sunflower seeds
- 1/4 cup raw organic pumpkin seeds
- 1/4 cup organic gogi berries, raisins or currants
- 1/2 cup organic dark chocolate chips

METHOD:

Heat honey, coconut oil, almond butter, sea salt, vanilla, and cinnamon in a sauce pan over low heat.

Combine remaining dry ingredients in a bowl.

Stir wet ingredients into dry ingredients and mix well.

Press into a greased 8x8 inch pan. Refrigerate until hardened. Cut into bars and enjoy.

Yields 16 bars.

About

Sue Ann Gleason is a Washington, DC-based culinary nutritionist, nourishment counselor, speaker, and writer. Her entertaining, cutting-edge articles on nourishment, the psychology of eating, and the blissful benefits of chocolate have appeared in various publications as well as her own eco-friendly blog: Chocolateforbreakfast.com

When not working with private clients or delivering [online programs](#), Sue Ann can be found sampling exotic chocolates or building broccoli forests in her mashed potatoes.

Contact her to schedule a Delicious Duo Session or to inquire about speaking engagements or radio appearances.

And, be sure to visit her lighten up and love life playground on [facebook!](#)



Sue Ann Gleason

Conscious Bites Nutrition
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