

# WELL FED NETWORK

WE'VE GOT A PLACE FOR YOU  
*Eating. Dining. Entertaining.*

## Quick Bites from the Chocolate Show in New York City

Posted by [Carrie Havranek](#) November 16, 2009



Recently, New York City's Metropolitan Pavilion hosted the 12th annual [Chocolate Show](#). I learned a few tasty things.

First, it's important to sit up front when you watch cooking demonstrations because samples are

usually gone by the time they get to the poor saps (read: me) in the back.

Secondly, chocolate is undoubtedly the next big area in which people are passionately developing socially and environmentally responsible practices and products; one chocolatier said that he thought chocolate is where coffee was ten years ago. Case in point: There were lots of adjectives such as "single source" "fair trade" and other similar monikers.

Thirdly, when consumed in small but consistent quantities over the course of a few hours, chocolate seems to work temporarily as an appetite suppressant. Fourth, and I know I am going to reap the consequences of admitting something that some might deem sacrilegious, there really is such a thing as too much chocolate.

Like other trade shows, it's a way for companies to hawk their wares and convince you to buy their products at special reduced prices, sign up for their mailing lists, and more. It's a celebration, too, of people who devote their lives to this wonderful thing called chocolate. But this one is unusual in that it's also open to the general public.

I snuck in early with the rest of the media people before doors opened at noon the day before Halloween. Awards were distributed to the top chocolatiers in North America, most of whom were on the premises to receive their honors. Some of the highlights? The glorious combination of peanut butter and chocolate, brought to new, exquisite heights, from the California-based company [Jer's Handmade Chocolates](#), which touts that U.S.-grown Valencia peanuts are used in its products. The company received a Best Chocolate Candy Bar or European-style Tablet, and one bite of any of their products, which I'd never tried before, told me why. They get big, delicious points for winning, classic combinations, such as caramel, peanut butter and dark chocolate (Cara Mella), and for marrying chocolate, peanut butter and pretzels (called Pretzo Changeo) in their gourmet peanut butter bars. The simplicity of ingredients yet depth of flavor is unmistakable and addictive.

I also fell in love with Madagascar chocolate from [Madecasse](#), a company started by former Peace Corps members. Madecasse works with rural cocoa farmers obtain the equipment, training and tools needed to produce its chocolate, which is actually manufactured in Madagascar. The company introduced its delicious, single-source chocolate earlier this year to the market. The 54 percent dark chocolate was actually fruity, with subtle wine overtones. The company won an award for Best Packaging. The is amazingly complex and should be eaten alongside wine. Ditto to [Republica de Cacao](#), which uses single-source Ecuadorean cacao for its dark chocolate products. [Pure Dark](#) set up an impressive display with hunks of chocolate the size of small boulders—they call these “slabs.” The New York City-based company’s artisanal dark chocolate is as minimally processed as possible, and I fell in love with their bark, generously studded with caramelized nibs, dried berries, and nuts; think trail mix, only in fancier bar form, and way more decadent. Pure Dark is fairly new; it opened in Greenwich Village in 2008, and with the spate of new chocolatiers in the past five years, it’s possible you missed it. Don’t!

I also forgot how people who tend to call themselves foodies also sometimes tend to be know-it-alls, driven by the need to impress others. Because I forgot all of this, I forgot how annoying it truly is. So, to the person who tried to convince me that white chocolate isn’t chocolate per se: yes, I know. Did that stop me from buying a bag of Guittard vanilla chips? No, because they are delicious and pair well with cranberries. And while I’m at it, to the person who said that buying a bag of Guittard chocolate chips, which easily retail for more than \$5 a bag and which the company was selling at the cut rate of FOUR FOR TEN DOLLARS, and using it for baking was “wasting it,” I hope you never eat a chocolate chip cookie you like. I can vouch that they were the best chocolate chips in a cookie that I have ever tasted, and I probably bake dozens and dozens of batches a year.

There. I feel better now.