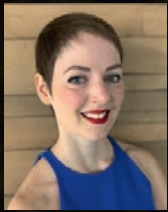


# OUT OF THE DARK...

It's the debate that divides the nation, especially at Easter: are you Team Milk or Team Dark?



## 'DARK CHOCOLATE IS CLOSER TO WHAT NATURE INTENDED'

*For associate features editor Laura Price, the more bitter, the better*

**D**ark chocolate is the only kind I can safely keep in the house without fear of it being snaffled. My husband is a Tony's Choclonely addict, while my stepdaughters devour everything from Freddos to Cadbury Creme Eggs. All this means my stash of 85% cocoa solids can remain in the cupboard untouched for weeks.

But its lack of theft-worthiness isn't the only reason I prefer dark. There are health benefits, too – research shows that the antioxidants and flavonoids will protect me from free radicals and cut my risk of heart disease; the lower sugar content, in my view, allows me to consume half a bar, guilt-free. Most importantly, there's the taste. Having trained my palate to enjoy black coffee and gin, I find milk chocolate too sweet.

Dark chocolate is, of course, far closer to what nature intended. Opinions differ on who invented it – the Mayans or the Olmecs – but the fruit of the cacao tree was certainly first made into a chocolate drink in Mexico some 4,000 years ago. Its name comes from the Aztec

xocolatl, meaning bitter (xoco) and water (atl). When I first tried it in Oaxaca, I was struck by how naturally the bittersweet chocolate paired with spice – which perhaps explains my love of Green & Black's Maya Gold.

At Easter, you will find me happily savouring rose and violet creams enrobed in the darkest of chocolate, while the kids wolf down their sickly eggs. And when it

comes to baking, it is my unswerving opinion that the darker the chocolate, the better the brownie (or cake). Thanks to a happy accident, I make my brownies with double the recommended amount of butter, ensuring they're deliciously dense. Yet it's the dark chocolate, rich in cocoa, that renders them truly decadent.

There's always a place in my heart for a chunk of Tony's Milk. But only a chunk.



### IF YOU ONLY TRY ONE...

**Dark Chocolate Ginger** (£4.50/180g). These plump nuggets of crystallised stem ginger are luxuriously sweet and spicy – enough to turn milk lovers to the dark side.

# INTO THE LIGHT?

Whichever side you're on, turn the page for our most chocolatey recipes yet...



## 'AS A CHILD, I PLAYED RUSSIAN ROULETTE WITH BOXES OF GUYLIAN SEASHELLS'

*Features editor Emma Hughes has spent a lifetime milking it*

**R**ecently I downloaded a food-waste-fighting app and immediately spotted that a boutique confectioner was offering a selection of mystery chocolates at an eye-poppingly low price. I clicked 'buy' and hurried on my way – only to be presented with a huge bag of darker-than-dark chocolates that the store hadn't been able to sell. It confirmed my suspicion that very few people, given a choice, will actually choose dark chocolate. I certainly never have.

As a child, I was an expert at playing Russian roulette with the boxes of Guylian Seashells my parents would acquire after dinner parties, timing my interventions when they were passed around after supper to ensure I only ever got the sweeter milk ones. As a teenager, I trekked to the nearest town for Thorntons Viennese Truffle bars, sugar-dusted and unthreateningly low in cocoa solids. I must have raised some eyebrows enjoying my bounty on the train home in the adolescent goth's uniform of black lipstick, army boots

and a spiked dog collar. But to me it made perfect sense: life was quite complicated enough without adding foods that make demands of you in the way that dark chocolate does.

I always thought dark chocolate would be something I would grow into enjoying, like coffee or Radio 4. But I'm 37 now and my preference for mellow milk shows no sign of shifting – in fact, it seems to become further entrenched the older I get. Milk chocolate is, I'll admit, not much use if you're baking a cake. But is there anything more purely pleasurable than

a still-warm cookie crammed with melting milk-chocolate chips?

Some things never change: one of the most romantic moments of my life was when a now-ex-boyfriend gave me a basket of milk-only Guylian Seashells he'd painstakingly harvested from several full boxes. Even encountering the finest artisanal dark chocolate through my work hasn't moved the dial. The head does its best, as the poet Wendy Cope wrote, to appreciate notes of green olive and tobacco, but the heart is the boss – and mine will forever belong to sweet, creamy, comforting milk. »

PHOTOGRAPHS: ADOBE STOCK; PORTRAITS: KATERINA VARNAVIDES, OLA SKIT



### IF YOU ONLY TRY ONE...

**No.1 Milk Chocolate with Feuilletine & Sea Salt** (£2.10/100g). A high-cocoa milk with sea salt and crisp feuilletine – imagine a KitKat dressed up for a night on the town.

## DARK, LIGHT WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

**DARK** The number on a chocolate bar's label is the percentage of its weight that comes from cocoa bean solids, rather than sugar, milk products and vanilla. The higher the cocoa content, the more intense the chocolate. Dark chocolate is usually at least 55%, but many fans regard anything less than 70% as cheating. Deep and bitter (in a good way!), it is the best chocolate for baking – especially brownies and rich chocolate cakes.

**MILK** In the UK, milk chocolate must legally contain at least 25% cocoa solids, but differences between milk and dark aren't set in stone: 'dark milk' chocolate, which typically has a cocoa percentage between 45% and 65%, is increasingly popular. It will always contain a milk product, however, such as powder or condensed milk. For this reason, it's sweeter and creamier than dark, but still has a rich cocoa backbone.

**WHITE** This contains no cocoa solids – it's made only with cocoa butter (the fat found in cocoa beans), milk solids and sugar – which means some chocolate-lovers dispute whether it's chocolate at all. White chocolate is intensely sweet with a buttery texture; it's also significantly more calorific than dark.

**RUBY** Yes, really. Invented by Swiss-Belgian chocolatiers Callebaut in 2017, this is a pinkish chocolate made from a specific type of cocoa bean. The flavour is like a tangier, fruitier version of white chocolate but it's not widely available.



RECIPES ROSIE BENSBURG PHOTOGRAPHS HANNAH TAYLOR • EDDINGTON  
FOOD STYLING ROSIE REYNOLDS • STYLING JULIE PATMORE

## Chocolate crémeux cornflake tart

*Inspired by the childhood favourite, this is given a grown-up twist with a rich, silky, dark-chocolate filling. It's an absolute winner of a pudding.*

**Serves** 12

**Prepare** 20 minutes

+ chilling + standing

**Cook** 20 minutes

- 200g dark chocolate, roughly chopped
- 100g unsalted butter
- 5 tbsp golden syrup
- Vegetable oil, for greasing
- 100g cornflakes
- Crème fraîche, to serve (optional)

### CRÉMEUX

- 200g dark chocolate, finely chopped
- 100g caster sugar
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 tsp vanilla bean paste
- ¼ tsp fine sea salt
- 100ml whole milk
- 200ml double cream

- 1** For the cornflake base, put the roughly chopped chocolate, butter and syrup in a heatproof bowl. Set it over a pan of barely simmering water, stirring occasionally, until melted (don't let the water touch the base of the bowl). Meanwhile, grease a 22cm loose-bottomed round tart tin with vegetable oil and line the base with baking parchment. Remove the melted chocolate from the heat, then tip in the cornflakes and gently fold together until well coated. Tip into the tin and push into the base and sides to form a tart case (use a glass or cup measure to help), making sure there are no gaps. Chill for at least 1 hour until set.
- 2** For the crémeux, tip the finely chopped chocolate into a heatproof bowl; set aside. In another heatproof bowl, use a balloon whisk to whisk together the sugar, egg yolks, vanilla bean paste and salt until combined. In a small pan, bring the milk and cream to a gentle simmer, then pour this over the egg mixture, whisking constantly until smooth.
- 3** Pour the mixture into a clean pan and set over a medium heat, stirring constantly for 5-8 minutes until it forms a custard; it should be thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Strain the custard through a sieve over the chocolate (the chocolate should be covered). Allow it to stand for 1 minute, then gently use a whisk to fold the mixture together until smooth and glossy. Pour into the tart case, then chill for at least 2 hours.
- 4** When almost ready to serve, take the tart out of the fridge and allow to stand at room temperature for 20-30 minutes. Release the tart from the tin (use a small, sharp knife to loosen around the edges of the tart if necessary) and serve with a dollop of crème fraîche, if liked.

**V Per serving** 1866kJ/449kcal/31g fat/19.1g saturated fat/35g carbs/26.9g sugars/3.9g fibre/4.9g protein/0.3g salt

## Tiramichoux

*If tiramisu and choux buns had a love child, this would be the delicious result! Crisp choux with a boozy coffee cream that's been coated in glossy milk chocolate sauce is the best of both worlds.*

**Serves** 6

**Prepare** 35 minutes  
+ cooling

**Cook** 1 hour

- 75g plain flour
- 65g unsalted butter
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 35g blanched hazelnuts
- 200g milk chocolate for cooking, roughly chopped
- 250g mascarpone
- 100ml double cream
- 2 tbsp strong coffee, cooled
- 1½ tbsp Marsala (or rum or brandy)
- About 1 tbsp cocoa powder, for dusting
- 1 tbsp caster sugar

**1** Preheat the oven to 220°C, gas mark 7. Line a baking tray with baking parchment. Sift the flour into a bowl with a pinch of salt. Put 50g of the butter in a medium saucepan with 125ml water and set over a medium heat until melted, then bring to the boil. Take the pan off the heat, then tip the flour into the melted butter mixture and beat with a wooden spoon until the mixture is starting to come away from the sides of the pan (about 1 minute).

**2** Tip into a mixing bowl, then add the beaten egg, a little at a time, beating well between each addition to form a shiny, glossy mixture (you may not need to use it all; keep adding just until the mixture falls off an upturned spoon in 3 seconds). Use a large spoon to dollop 6 mounds of the choux bun mixture onto the baking tray. If the tops are bumpy, dip a finger in water and use to smooth them out.

**3** Bake for 15 minutes, then reduce the oven temperature to 180°C, gas mark 4, and bake for a further 10-15 minutes until golden and puffed up. Use a serrated knife to carefully cut the top ⅓ off each bun, then return the tops and bases to the oven, cut-sides up, for a further 2-5 minutes to dry out. Transfer to a wire rack to cool. Tip the hazelnuts onto a baking tray and roast for 4-5 minutes until golden; allow to cool, then roughly chop.

**4** To make the filling, melt 100g chocolate in the microwave or over a pan of simmering water, then set aside to cool. In a mixing bowl, use an electric hand mixer to beat the mascarpone, double cream, cooled chocolate, coffee, alcohol and a pinch of salt until light and fluffy (about 3-5 minutes). Spoon into a piping bag fitted with a star nozzle, then generously pipe the mixture into the base of each choux bun. Scatter over the hazelnuts. Sieve the cocoa powder over the choux bun tops, then rest these on the filling. The empty choux buns and mascarpone filling can be made a few hours ahead; cover and store the mascarpone mixture in the fridge and fill the buns just before serving.

**5** When you are ready to serve, put the remaining 100g chocolate, 125ml hot water and the caster sugar in a pan set over a medium heat until melted, stirring frequently. Bring to the boil and cook until the mixture thickens and becomes syrupy (8-10 minutes), then beat in the remaining 15g butter. Divide the filled buns among 6 plates and pour over a generous amount of the chocolate sauce to serve.

✓ **Per serving** 2720kJ/656kcal/52g fat/31.1g saturated fat/33g carbs/23.1g sugars/2.4g fibre/9.7g protein/0.3g salt

