

MICHAEL RECCHIUTI BIO



Michael Recchiuti, a self-made chocolatier, has been conjuring sweets all his life, first in Philadelphia, baking Italian wedding cakes alongside his grandmother as a boy, then creating plated desserts as a young man at the renowned restaurant Le Bec Fin and even training with Alain Tricou (Maxim's, Déjà Vu) for three years in sugar and chocolate. His preference for the bold and innovative lead him to the west coast and to San Francisco, an obvious choice for a budding chocolatier. While he never received a formal culinary education, his time with Tricou woke a passion for chocolate and offered him a chance to hone his palate and style.

Drawn there in 1987 by a chocolate-friendly climate and exciting music and arts scene, Michael found new inspiration in the year-round availability of fresh ingredients and exotic, ethnic flavors. He was especially fascinated by the way unlikely flavors, typically found in savory cooking, took on new dimensions and depth when combined with chocolate. His now famous chocolate flavors Tarragon Grapefruit, Lemon Verbena and Star Anise & Pink Peppercorn were among the first “experiments.” That ongoing fascination along with a nostalgic nod to the tastes of his youth continue to inspire his more recent creations, Fleur de Sel Caramel, Cardamom Nougat chocolate and handmade Recchiuti Marshmallows.

In 1997, after years in the test kitchen, Michael was ready to bring his creations to a larger audience and to introduce Americans to “real” chocolate. He founded Recchiuti Confections with his wife Jacky and the idea that once you introduce truly exquisite chocolates to people, they will be won over instantly and forever. Then, as now, he achieved those exquisite confections by painstakingly selecting each ingredient that would go into the final creation. He'd visit the San Francisco farmers' market for bundles of fresh lavender, tarragon and lemon verbena, which he'd carefully dry for use in his signature infusions. He made frequent trips to local chocolate manufacturers, trying their latest offerings and deciding if they had the right texture, color and acidity for each new blend he was developing. And he'd meticulously see to each step that turned those fine ingredients into finer confections, using traditional European techniques and equipment. But taste and technique only tell part of the story. Michael's life is filled with art, music and lots of friends, so the look of his chocolates acts as a show-and-tell of his favorite things. Some feature drawings, etchings and paintings from his favorite San Francisco artists, while others are adorned with Japanese block prints, tiny love letters to his Hawaiian wife, Jacky.

In 2005 Michael's book *Chocolate Obsession* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang), co-authored with renowned pastry expert Fran Gage, was released to wide acclaim; the book was a finalist at the 2006 James Beard Awards and won high honors for photography and design at the 2006 International Association of Culinary Professionals annual conference.

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