

# 10 Things You Need To Know About Michael Recchiuti

THE CITY'S HIGHLY WORSHIPPED CHOCOLATIER REFUSES TO SELL OUT.  
BY ANDREA ARRIA-DEVOE

Ask Michael Recchiuti, the wizard behind the extraordinary truffles sold at the Ferry Building Marketplace, to reflect on the much-bemoaned sale of Joseph Schmidt and Scharffen Berger to Hershey's, and there's no denying he's a man of the people. The Philadelphia native's first thoughts go to his customers. "If I sold the company, it would be uncomfortable for me to show my face at the Ferry Building. I would probably have to leave San Francisco," he jokes—sort of. "People here are hard-core."



Recchiuti hopes that Hershey's will use the knowledge gained from the acquisition to educate the public about quality chocolate. But until cacao percentages start appearing on Kit Kat wrappers, he's taking a slightly different approach to bringing his passion to the people.

His new cookbook is the latest example. In *Chocolate Obsession: Confections and Treats to Create and Savor* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang), Recchiuti collaborates with longtime friend and fellow pastry chef Fran Gage. Keeping in mind dabblers and professionals alike, they break down each recipe—from sophisticated tarragon-and-candied-grapefruit ganaches to simple s'mores—into painstaking detail.

As further proof of Recchiuti's everyman inclinations, his recipe for a peanut-butter puck elevates a classic. "We figured the person who created [the Reese's] thought it should taste like this, but over the years it diminished in quality," he says. What other iconic American candy would he like to see made over? "I would love to do Raisinets." ✕



MICHAEL RECCHIUTI HAS A WAY WITH CHOCOLATE.

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## 1 FAN CLUB

Accustomed to having their own following, Michael Recchiuti and his wife and business partner, Jacky, claim to be groupies themselves when it comes to a band called Earlimart, an L.A.-based ensemble heavily influenced by the late, great Elliott Smith. "We always bring them chocolate," Recchiuti says.

## 2 GOT MILK?

Recchiuti is a fan of high-cacao milk chocolate. "I like the flavor of milk, but I like to be able to taste the cacao." He'll soon be releasing two new products to reflect his preference: a 55 percent milk chocolate bar and the incredibly smooth Feve 85 percent bittersweet chocolate bar studded with cacao nibs.

## 3 NECESSARY OBJECTS

The biggest investment a budding chocolatier might want to make is an immersion blender for emulsifying. Otherwise, Recchiuti recommends spending money on quality ingredients. "Expensive equipment doesn't make you a really good chocolate maker."

## 4 TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Forget Sur La Table and try your local hardware store for resources. Cheap plastic paint scrapers come in handy for tempering chocolate, and warming a stainless-steel bowl with a \$15 heating pad is an easy way to keep melted chocolate at the perfect temperature—a tip Recchiuti picked up from a French chef.

## 5 BURN, BABY, BURN

Don't be afraid to go all the way. Along with the recipe for the burnt-caramel base that Recchiuti uses in everything from pots de crème to a warm milk-chocolate drink, his cookbook provides a picture to show home cooks what their finished product should look like: a cola-colored amber.

## 6 MINT CONDITION

Even a haute-confection maker has his guilty chocolate pleasure. Recchiuti has maintained a soft spot for Junior Mints since he was a kid.

## 7 SWEET INSPIRATIONS

Once a year, the Recchiutis invite local artists to design their truffles. Past contributors have included Sherry Olsen, Beth Weintraub and Kelly Tunstall. Up next is Paul Madonna, illustrator of "All Over Coffee" in the *SF Chronicle*.

## 8 MEMBERS ONLY

Recchiuti holds the distinction of being the first American to be invited into the Club du Chocolat aux Palais, an exclusive 13-year-old organization in Paris devoted to serious chocolate lovers.

## 9 FRUIT BOMB

Not every flavor can be a slam dunk. Recchiuti admits that his biggest bust was a pink-peppercorn-and-fig gelée. "Some combos aren't really happening."

## 10 THICK AND THIN

As far as family-run businesses go, Guittard has been a role model for Recchiuti. "[They're] over 100 years old, and they haven't sold their company," he says. "They've been through wars, they've gone through depressions and they're still here."