

SWEET SPOTS: Local chocolatiers offer everybody's favorite gifts for Valentine's Day

By Marisa Religa Delish Magazine
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A chocolate apple from All That Chocolate.



Let's not overthink this — chocolate is always the best gift on Valentine's Day. We've got you covered for the sweetest experience this February 14. The Niagara region is home to a hearty batch of local chocolate shops to fulfill all of your Valentine's Day needs.

First stop: Niagara Falls. Niagara's Honeymoon Sweets Gourmet Chocolate is where Mary Ann Hess pours as much heart into her work as she does chocolate into her molds. If you're looking for something unique, the hand-dipped, chocolate covered Triscuits topped with almonds is the perfect combination of sweet and salty. What initially comes as a surprise combination has become a local favorite. A box of this original treat will leave your taste buds asking for more.

For those looking for something to catch the eye in addition to the taste buds, the Blushing Hearts are sure to do the trick. These white chocolate chubby hearts are dusted with a pearlized sheen, and include dried strawberries at their center giving the illusion of a soft red glow.

Honeymoon Sweets' edible photos are a unique gift idea this Valentine's Day. Select a photograph of your loved one, and Mary Ann will create an entirely edible photo confection in color with a festive frame. The frame is also edible.

"All of our products are made in small batches with natural ingredients and are designed especially for you," she said.

Evie Kresman, a loyal customer, keeps coming back because of the visible passion and quality she experiences at the shop. "Everything here is so fresh and unique. If Mary Ann doesn't have it, she'll find a way to get you what you need," she said.

Some of the bon-bons to consider for Valentine's Day include flavorful combinations such as white chocolate filled with blueberry, and dark chocolate filled with apricot. In terms of clusters, cherry almond biscotti, orange cranberry walnut, and lemon pistachio clusters are on the menu.

Next stop: North Tonawanda. Platters Chocolates is the place for a wide variety for Valentine's Day gift shopping. While you shop, you can stop to watch the chocolate production through the multiple viewing windows.

In the store, you'll find their sponge candy hearts, a twist on a local favorite, made with the secret family recipe in milk, dark, orange, and very popular peanut-butter flavors.

This family-run business takes pride in being an affordable luxury. "Handmade, homemade here at Platter's we have a gift for everyone and we're here to help. Chocolate, coffee, and ice-cream — just a fun experience is what we're here for," says family member Kelly DiGuiseppe, who works as the general manager.

You can stick with the classics, such as the hand-dipped chocolate-covered strawberries and old fashioned satin hearts. Or, veer a little on the adventurous side with their creative expressions using orange chocolate for which Platter's is well-known. The team at Platter's has gotten especially creative, and the options include orange chocolate custard, orange hot fudge, and orange flavored coffee and hot chocolate, to name some popular choices.

Because there is also a cafe offering ice cream and other treats, shoppers can make it a family occasion and spend the afternoon in this warm, welcoming environment.

Next up: All That Chocolate in Wilson. You can find the candy delights of mother-daughter duo Christine DeLuca and Alexa Martin available throughout the community year-round at DiCamillo's, and at their frequent pop-up shops at places like Brickyard Brewing Company, the Kenan Center, the Grand Island Welcome Center, as well as at local schools and hospitals.

DeLuca and Martin are best known for their chocolate caramel dipped apples, for which hand-selected, locally-grown apples are dipped in caramel, rolled in select nuts, covered in milk chocolate, and topped with a sprinkled garnish. Their large size — almost two pounds — makes them perfect for slicing and sharing.

Heavenly Mix is an All That Chocolate signature product you can't miss. This blend of oat and rice cereal with pretzels and walnuts coated in white chocolate is what Christine refers to as "a little piece of heaven."

Bark lovers will enjoy their newest specialty, Off the Cuff, which includes crushed biscotti, Oreo's, and pretzels coated in rich chocolate, a treat that is perfect for the chocoholic. Visit the shop in Wilson by appointment, or check out their upcoming presentations at Saint Mary's Hospital in Lewiston on February 13 or at Memorial Hospital in Niagara Falls on February 14. Both appearances will be held in the lobby from 10a.m. to 4 p.m.

Last stop: Della's Chocolates. If you find yourself just outside of Niagara County, be sure to stop into Della's Chocolates in downtown Medina. Another family-run business, these chocolate-lovers like to keep it sweet with the classics. Their assorted creams come heart shaped for Valentine's Day and offer original flavors like maple, mint, orange, raspberry, caramel, and strawberry cheesecake. Della's is known for their classic Rocky Road made of rich dark chocolate, chewy marshmallows, and toasted nuts, as well as for their assorted gift baskets offering a little bit of everything.

Between the long-standing classics and the creative innovations there's something to satisfy every taste bud at chocolatiers in the Niagara region. Shoppers can show their support for local family businesses while finding the perfect gift for a loved one that hits the sweet spot.

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