

Perfect Dark Chocolate Pairings

featuring Zöet Premium Belgian Chocolate

Smooth, decadent chocolate is a classic Valentine's Day indulgence. But do you know dark varieties of chocolate are actually good for the heart, too? Here's why...

The darker the chocolate, the healthier it is for you and your Valentine. Cacao beans contain nutrients such as iron, potassium and fiber, and also a potent class of antioxidants called *flavonoids*. The higher the percentage of cacao in a chocolate bar, the darker the chocolate, and the higher it is in flavonoid antioxidants. These flavonoids appear to have beneficial effects on the body, such as relaxing blood vessels, promoting healthy circulation and playing a role in healthy blood pressure levels.

As with many of the finer things in life, less can be more. The health benefits associated with dark chocolate consumption have been seen in modest consumption of approximately one ounce – one-third of a Zöet bar - a few times per week.

Darker chocolate's characteristic bitterness is best appreciated through pairing it well with complementary flavors. If you're new to dark chocolate, start with 57% cacao Zöet dark chocolate and work your way up to higher percentages of cacao over time. The smoothness of Zöet premium Belgian chocolate will make a dark chocolate aficionado out of anyone!

Try some of these perfect dark-chocolate-with-food-and-drink pairings; we believe you'll be pleasantly surprised by some of these combinations:

- 1. Fruit:** Known for its bitter bite, dark chocolate helps neutralize very sweet fruits such as strawberries, bananas and dried apricots. However, its properties also create a combo with citrus fruits that pack an edgy punch for true chocolate connoisseurs.
- 2. Nuts:** Nuts in chocolate desserts make an interesting addition from both taste and texture points of view. Add roasted hazelnuts, almonds and/or walnuts to a chocolate bark recipe (such as the one listed below) for added crunch and a delicious nutty bite.
- 3. Cheese:** The sweetness of chocolate can sometimes overwhelm the palate, which is why aged cheddars, Gouda, Havarti and Parmigiano-Reggiano have a strong enough flavor to balance perfectly. Spread toasted baguette slices with melted chocolate and sprinkle with Parmigiano-Reggiano.
- 4. Coffee:** Dark chocolate can have some very strong coffee undertones. And, since these two favorite foods are grown in similar regions of the world, coffee and chocolate have flavor profiles that tend to naturally complement each other. Dark chocolate goes well with a bold coffee, such as Italian roast. Serve small chunks of dark chocolate with freshly brewed coffee for a sweet and ultimately satisfying end to a meal.
- 5. Wine:** Pair chocolate and wine according to the darkness of the chocolate. Like food, follow the general rule of wine pairings: the darker the chocolate, the darker the wine. Red wines (like Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon or Zinfandel) are ideal for dark chocolate.
- 6. Beer:** For beer drinkers, dark chocolate pairs well with dark beers, like oatmeal stout.

Salted Caramel Chocolate Bark

Makes 3 dozen (1-1/2-inch) pieces

All you need:

2 cups chopped bittersweet or semisweet chocolate (or chips), such as Zöet Premium Belgium 57% Dark Chocolate
12 caramel squares
1 teaspoon water, divided
¼ teaspoon flaky sea salt
Chopped nuts (optional)

All you do:

1. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil. (Take care to avoid wrinkles!)
2. Place chocolate in a medium microwave-safe bowl; microwave on MEDIUM for 1 minute. Stir, then continue microwaving on MEDIUM, stirring every 20 seconds, until melted. (Alternatively, place in the top of a double boiler over hot, but not boiling, water. Stir until melted.)
3. Combine 6 caramel squares and ½ teaspoon water in a small bowl; microwave on HIGH just until melted, 30 to 60 seconds. Immediately stir the melted caramel thoroughly into the melted chocolate. Scrape the mixture onto the foil and spread it into a 9-inch square.
4. Combine the remaining 6 caramel squares with ½ teaspoon water in the small bowl and microwave on HIGH until melted, 30 to 60 seconds. Immediately drizzle the caramel over the chocolate and sprinkle with salt (and nuts, if desired). Refrigerate until set, about 30 minutes.
5. Transfer the bark and foil to a cutting board. Use a sharp knife to cut into 1-1/2-inch pieces.

Nutrition info: 52 calories, 3 g fat, 8 g carbohydrate, 1 g dietary fiber, 20 mg sodium

Chocolate-Dipped Clementines

Serves: 30 (1 each)

Source: adapted from Eating Well, Inc.

All you need:

1/2 c. bittersweet chocolate chips
4 clementines, at room temperature, peeled and sectioned
1 tbsp finely chopped crystallized ginger

All you do:

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment or waxed paper.
2. Place chocolate chips in a small glass bowl. Microwave on MEDIUM for 1 minute. Stir, then continue microwaving in 20-second intervals until melted, stirring after each interval. (Alternatively, melt in the top of a double boiler over hot, but not boiling, water.)
3. Dip half to two-thirds of each clementine section into the melted chocolate. Let the excess drip back into the bowl. Place the dipped fruit on the prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle crystallized ginger over the chocolate. Refrigerate until the chocolate is set, about 30 minutes.
4. To make ahead: Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 day.

Each clementine has only 18 calories, 3 grams of carbs, and 1 gram of fat!

RD Pick of the Month: Zoet Dark Premium Belgium Chocolate

5 REASONS TO EAT Zoet Dark Chocolate



1. It is sweetly luxurious, sweetly indulgent and sweetly satisfying. Zoet is the Dutch word for sweet!
2. It takes a smaller amount of dark chocolate than milk chocolate to cure a chocolate craving.
3. Dark chocolate has antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties, which are good for the brain and heart.
4. There are many ways to incorporate dark chocolate into your day!
5. Dark chocolate pairs perfectly with many foods, including: strawberries, dried apricots, almonds, walnuts, Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, Havarti cheese, coffee and merlot wine.

Mindful Eating as a Tool for Healthy Living

Have you ever sat down in front of the television with a bag of chips and the next thing you know, the entire bag is devoured? Where did they go? And, how is it that I never really tasted them (or smelled it or enjoyed it, for that matter)? We are a population of distracted eaters. We eat watching t.v., or in the car, or while working on the computer or while mad, glad and sad. Unfortunately, this distraction leads to a struggle over the simple, biologically natural, pleasurable act of eating. How is it that food and eating have become such a common source of unhappiness? And why has it occurred in a country with an abundance of food? The fundamental reason for our imbalance with food and eating is that we've forgotten how to be present as we eat.

There is a new movement into the world of mindful eating. You may be asking – “what is mindful eating?” The simple answer is that it is a deliberate increased awareness of what is happening both in your body, heart and mind and outside yourself in your environment. Of course, nothing that involves human behavior is simple, but awareness is usually the first step in allowing us to change our behaviors.

Mindful eating is NOT a diet. It is NOT a quick fix. Dieting can promote an obsession with food and weight, feelings of guilt and deprivation. This can become an endless cycle of dieting, throwing in the towel and eating anything, dieting again and so on. If you want to lose weight but would rather ditch diets forever, it may be time to try mindful eating.

Let's think about the last time that you went to your favorite restaurant. What smells, sounds and sounds enhanced the dining experience – before you even have taken a bite of food? Our satisfaction with food and eating is more than just how it taste in our mouth, we use all our senses. Remember back to a time when you received poor service at a restaurant. Did the food taste as good to you?

Next, think about the physical signals your body was giving you. Were you hungry at the beginning of the meal? So hungry that you ordered an extra appetizer (and later regretted it)? Or, maybe not really hungry at all, but you were eating because your family wanted to go. Now, recall the end of the meal. Why did you stop eating? Your plate was clean? You were so full you that couldn't possibly eat another bite? We don't do a very good job of listening to what our body is telling us. We override our natural hunger and satiety signals with distracted eating. A person with intuitive or mindful eating eats when they are hungry, but not starving, and knows when they are starting to feel full and stops then. A distracted eater will eat until they are so full they are miserable or simply graze throughout the day without ever really feeling hungry or full.

Finally, how much do you enjoy your food? Recall the first bite of your favorite dish at the restaurant – how the aroma entices you when it arrives and how the first bite virtually melts in your mouth. Now, think about the last bite – did you even taste it? Through our unmindful eating, we somehow have become disjointed from the enjoyment of food. We have the mentality of “trudging” through it, despite the fact that it doesn't taste as good anymore and we are starting to get physically uncomfortable from over eating. So many times, if we allow ourselves the luxury of taking the time to really savor each bite of our food, we can stop eating when we are satisfied not physically ready to bust a button!

Mindful eating doesn't happen overnight – it is a process and takes some practice. However, once you make the commitment to eating without distractions and feed your body food when it is hungry, you can focus your attention to other needs that must be fulfilled. Once no foods are “off limits,” you will find that you don't feel the need to gorge on your favorite forbidden foods because you are going back to your strict diet tomorrow.

What can you do to eat mindfully today?

Interested in learning more about mindful or intuitive eating? Check out these great websites:

www.amihungry.com

www.tcme.org

www.intuitiveeating.org

Shannon Frink, MS, RD, LMNT

sfrink@hy-vee.com

Hy-vee Dietitian

Taste of Irish Cooking!

Irish cooking is more than corned beef and cabbage! It is an ethnic feast of hearty, yet simple to cook meals. Join Shannon, Hy-Vee dietitian, as we prepare and sample a traditional Irish meal, including Irish Stew, Champ (Irish mashed potatoes), Irish Soda Bread and Irish Apple Cake in this hands-on class. This class will be held Tuesday, March 11th, 6-8 p.m. and cost \$28. For further information, contact Shannon at 308-381-2627 or sign up at Customer Service.

“Can”tastic Reasons to Choose Canned Fruits and Veggies!

Back in the 18th century, canning began its evolution when Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte issued a challenge for someone to come up with a safe way to preserve food in quantity to feed his troops. Hundreds of years later, canned food is a part of everyday life.

In the canning process, food is sealed into an airtight, cleaned and sterilized container using heat to kill bacteria and other microorganisms that cause food to spoil. Over the years, the processing conditions have been dramatically refined so the best texture, greatest flavor and maximum nutrition are retained in canned foods.

Myths about canned foods are abundant. Here is some “food for thought” to help reveal the truths:

Myth # 1: Canned food is high in sodium.

Fact: No sodium (or other preservative) is needed to make canned food safe. Salt is added simply to enhance the taste of a particular food. In fact, “no sodium” and “low sodium” options are readily available for many products. Draining and rinsing canned food before use reduces sodium levels 23-40% according to a study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*.



Myth # 2: All canned fruit is high in sugar.

Fact: Besides those fruits canned with heavy and light syrups made with added sugar, many canned fruits are available packed in their own juice or water. Just as with rinsing added sodium from vegetables, rinsing fruit before serving can reduce the amount of added sugar.

Myth # 3: Fresh food is best.

Fact: In a University of California-Davis study, researchers found when a food is eaten, regardless of being fresh, (frozen) or canned, the nutrient levels are not significantly different. Researchers at Michigan State University found a nutritional advantage in certain foods for canned vs. fresh fruits and vegetables.

From olives to tuna and pureed pumpkin to evaporated milk, canning is a healthy way to decrease food waste, increase convenience of perishable foods and save money. Canning also increases the variety of nutritional fruits and vegetables available to consumers in the Midwest where food is not grown year-round. Remember - if a can is leaking, bulging, dented, cracked, discolored or smells bad, DON'T USE IT! Take advantage of specials and stock up on “cantastic” canned foods for great taste, economy, variety, convenience and nutritional benefit.

Corn and Black Bean Enchilada Casserole

2 tsp Hy-Vee Select chili-flavored olive oil	1 shallot, diced
1 (15 oz) can enchilada sauce	1 (16 oz) jar salsa
1 (15 oz) can no salt added black beans, drained and rinsed	1 (15 oz) can no salt added corn
1 (9oz) pkg corn tortillas, divided	3 c. Mexican-blend shredded cheese, divided.

All you do

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add shallot and cook until tender, about 3 minutes.
2. Stir in enchilada sauce, salsa, beans and corn. Bring to a simmer.
3. Pour 1/3 of salsa mixture into the bottom of a greased 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Top with 1/2 corn tortillas and 1 cup cheese. Top cheese with 1/3 salsa mixture and remaining tortillas. Top with remaining salsa mixture. Cover with remaining cheese.
4. Bake uncovered for 15 to 20 minutes or until cheese is browned.