

{ HOT SPOT }

BEAN *to* DREAM

Artisan chocolatiers set up shop in Old Town. BY RHEA MAZE



TOBY, ALIX, AND MAX GADD stood at the base of a majestic cacao tree in the jungle of Manzanillo, Costa Rica and watched in awe as their guide picked a few of its pods and led them through a primitive chocolate making session. “It was deeply fascinating,” Toby Gadd says. “It blew me away.”

The longtime Fort Collins residents returned inspired to explore chocolate’s potential and began making small batches at home. What began as a passionate hobby quickly took over their kitchen and completely changed their lives.

Today, Alix is whipping up a batch of truffles in their chocolate factory on Oak Street while Toby chats up a customer at their retail and tasting shop on Pine Street. The couple’s 14-year-old son, Max, makes deliveries between the factory and shop via a French-style wooden cart when on break from school.

Toby and Alix left the corporate world behind, pooled their collective experience from former

careers, and went all-in to build a small batch single origin chocolate business from the ground up. Nuance Chocolate opened its doors in October 2014, just two years after the Costa Rica vacation that started it all.

Visitors to the Old Town shop can choose from three taster flights featuring a rotating cast of authentic, high-quality chocolates, from 70-percent single origins to milk, white, and vanilla varieties. Flavors are released as each sample melts in your mouth, hitting on different taste receptors, and

the Gadds ensure the experience is as much about understanding the process behind the chocolate as it is about discovering each variety’s nuances for yourself. Because ultimately the evolving foodie culture of Fort Collins is what inspired the Gadds to open the retail and tasting shop, and not simply start a wholesale business.

“This town really cares about handcrafted, real food that’s made locally,” Gadd says. “We’re excited to have the community as a tasting panel.”



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE GLASS



The SWEET SPOT

Like wine and coffee, the flavor profile of a cacao bean depends on its terroir. Each location yields a different crop each year. Nuance Chocolate's bean to bar process begins with ethically sourced, fermented beans from various single origins around the equator. The fermentation process gives the beans chemical precursors that can be developed into specific flavor nuances.

The beans are gently roasted in small batches through a complicated dance with different temperatures, allowing the Gadds to maximize each bean's potential with the expression of an ideal blend of flavor notes.



COMFORT Food

Warm up with a mug of Aztec or French-style hot cocoa made with single-origin chocolate from Ghana as you ponder the shop's goodies and taster flight options. Don't leave without a box of truffles made with Feisty Spirits peach brandy. "Truffles are the purest expression of a good chocolatier," Gadd says.

214 Pine St. (next to the Welsh Rabbit Cheese Shop), 970-484-2330, nuancechocolate.com



Alix & Toby Gadd

The husk is separated from the bean leaving cacao nibs, which are ground into a chocolate liquor and mixed in melangers that churn the mass with sugar, and in some cases vanilla beans and/or milk powder, on granite wheels down to a very small particle size until proper smoothness and flavor is achieved.

The perfected mixture is poured into bricks and tempered, a process that gives chocolate its gloss, snap, and necessary mouth feel and melting points, before being shaped into Nuance Chocolate's signature bar molds and carted over to the shop.

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