



At Li-Lac Chocolates, John Rath displays some tasty New York landmarks.

Lynn Testa

## Constant Shopper

# When Chocolate Is Your Fatal Attraction

By Cindy Frenkel

When "Jane Fonda's Workout Record" first came out about six years ago, a lot of people I knew bought it. Eventually, I admit, I wondered what all the fuss was about, and I, too, purchased one. I listened to it with my friend Julie. We sat on my bed and ate Chocolate-Chip Haagen-Daz as Jane told us to "make it burn."

For all others with my predicament, I have good news: I'm going to tell you about places for chocolate. And I assume you already know about the champagne truffles at Tauscher, Kron's record albums and torsos, the exquisite designs of Godiva, Perugia, and even the intimate edibles at the Erotic Baker. You also know about Ben & Jerry's New York Super Fudge Chunk and Steve's Heavy Belgian Chocolate. But where do you find great mud cake for a party? Oreos dipped in white chocolate?

I go into E.A.T. Gourmet (1064 Madison Avenue between 80th and 81st, 772-0022) and feel guilty buying a miniature cupcake for \$2 (the size of very large candy), then, as I walk toward Fifth, I bite into it. Rich, dark chocolate cake, creamy icing...These cupcakes are mini-versions of Eli's chocolate cake—which means that you can order it big enough to feed 100 people (and even the little cupcakes can be decorated).

Early Saturday morning, I pass by a Korean grocer watering his plants, turn the corner, and inhale the sweet smell at Soutine (104 W. 70th Street between Columbus and Broadway, 496-1450) where some of the finest *pain au chocolat* can be had (for \$1.10 apiece—not bad). This is a wonderful bakery to know about; it's in the old tradition, small and friendly with delicious baked goods.

Their flourless chocolate fudge cake, decorated with candied violet and dusted with powdered sugar on top, is superb. Available in two sizes, a 5" for \$5 and a 7" for \$10; the 5" is just the right amount for dessert with four close friends who don't want to be too bad.

Soutine makes a tinier version for Bloomingdale's, or for you; you can order them for parties for \$1 each; they're about 1 and 1/2" in diameter, and are beautiful. (They just made a large one for a party that had whipped cream over the cake, then was glazed with white chocolate and decorated with white chocolate clusters, hazelnuts dipped in white chocolate, and candied violets for color!) If you like macarons, remember Soutine: large coconut macarons are dipped in dark chocolate; \$1.00 each and excellent.

If you don't already know about Li-Lac Chocolates (120 Christopher Street between Bleeker and Hudson, 242-7374) you should. Since 1923 they've been making chocolates in the back of the shop, and some of the recipes that were used then are still used today (though now they have a

mail order business, an 800 number, and their candy's also sold at Barney's at higher cost).

Li-Lac has the prettiest printed boxes—of lilacs, of course—and you can choose about 70 kinds of handmade chocolates. Li-Lac is owned by Ed Bond, and his sister Martha Bond Saucier recently invented the combination of fresh lemon slices dipped in white chocolate. These give bittersweet a whole other meaning as the tartness of the lemon is cut by the sweetness of the chocolate (\$12 a pound).

Here's where you can buy oreos covered in white chocolate. And there are six flavors of homemade fudge. Also recommended are maple-walnut cremes dipped in dark chocolate, and huge coconut ovals (\$12 a pound) dipped in dark chocolate (also white or mild). Most candy is \$15 a pound.

Truffles in 9 flavors include Grand Marnier, raspberry, mocha-rum and their most popular, hazelnut (\$22 a pound). Large, beautiful half slices of pineapple are fully covered (hand-dipped) in chocolate; \$1.50 each. If you love great chocolate and don't care how it looks, their chocolate break up is \$8 a pound.

Molded items range from \$2 to \$30 for a solid Empire State building, and include chocolate farm animals. A Cadillac and a Porsche are the same price: \$14, and a passenger bus is \$30. If you want a special order, like a 15-pound Teddy Bear, they'll make it for you. And they're open 7 days a week.

When I walked into Mondel Chocolates (2913 Broadway between 113th Street and 114th, 864-2111) Florence Mondel was funnelling chocolate into cups. "I love music, and I was watching the Philharmonic the other night," she began, "and I saw three of my customers in the orchestra!"

Mondel's is a small, family business with a large following; they've been making homemade chocolates since 1943. There are hundreds of molded items starting at \$1.25 for Snoopy, a lobster, or an alligator. Raisin bark and most chocolates are \$14.99 a pound, but Florence is thinking of raising her prices slightly. I'm particularly fond of their new peanut butter squares covered in dark chocolate.

Like Li-Lac, there's a large selection of light, dark and milk chocolate. Their mocha chocolate truffles are \$14.99 a pound, and just the right richness—not too overwhelming. Orange peels are \$15.99 a pound. If you're in search of the best dark chocolate caramels, or need dietetic chocolates (made from a recipe Florence's father invented), you'll be happy to know this store. Open on Sundays before major holidays.

At 72nd and Columbus, there used to be a store called The Natural Source that had some of the best cakes around. They were high and moist; you didn't sit around admiring how lovely they looked, you bought

a piece and dug in.

The Natural Source still exists, but now they're only wholesale (I found their cakes at Six-Vee, a busy deli on 42nd Street). You can call up The Natural Source, and find out the place nearest you to order an entire cake or buy a slice: their number is 936-7060.

One of my favorites is their 3-layer chocolate cake filled and topped with a rich white buttercream frosting garnished with coconut; the sides are iced with dark chocolate. Prices range from \$26 to \$30 for a 9" cake, and it can serve 12 to 16 (it usually weighs close to 9 pounds!) Wherever you order from, give 3 to 4 days notice if you want to order a cake.

The Silver Palate's Fudge Sauce is \$6 and worth every penny; you can go to their store (274 Columbus between 72nd and 73rd streets, 799-6340) or find it at Altman's or one of the fancier supermarkets like The Food Emporium.

At Jon Vie Pastries and Cafe (492 Sixth Ave. between 12th and 13th, 242-4400) all the pastries are kosher, and their candy brownies with pecans are great. At \$2 apiece the price is steep, but the brownie's so rich you might want to share it.

Also in the Village, Patisserie Lanciani (271 W. 4th between Perry and W. 11th, 929-0739 and 177 Prince St. between Thompson and Sullivan, 477-2788) has a superb Sacher torte; it's a chocolate nut flourcake soaked in rum; 6" is \$13, and 8" is \$18 (or \$3.50 per slice to take out).

At Umanoff & Parsons (467 Greenwich St. south of Canal in Tribeca, 219-2240) there's an outrageously wonderful chocolate mud cake; it's a fudgy, composed cake that forms a shell with mousse inside and chunks of chocolate fudge cake on top drizzled with ganache; a 10" size is \$20, and well worth it (for \$25 they'll decorate it—call a day or two before). Closed Saturdays, open Sundays 10-2.

Another dessert that's guaranteed to make you feel guilty is Ms. Dessert's Chocolate Mud Loaf, a decadent chocolate cake iced with a rich chocolate glaze. Ms. Dessert wholesales out of New Jersey, but they sell to many places in Manhattan including University Food Market on Broadway at 115th, Burke & Burke on East 23rd Street (corner of Broadway) and Lamstons Cookworld on East 42nd Street (call Ms. Dessert at 201-964-6866 to find out other places).

A 3-pound mud loaf is about a foot long, and serves up to 25; prices for it will vary from \$18 to \$22. It's great for entertaining: cut into slices and top each with vanilla ice cream. Buy frozen raspberries at the grocery, let them thaw so they're runny, and spoon them over the cake and ice cream. When guests praise your dessert, say you worked for hours. Forget to mention it was at the office.