

Sweet from start to finish

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Picky Eater

LET THE BUNNY take care of the basket; you can focus on sweets for the table with just a few clicks, no baking required. Go to galaxydesserts.com and peruse the sweet lineup of frozen desserts made by the bakers at Richmond's **Galaxy Desserts**. The Bay Area company makes everything from bread pudding to mousse cakes and ships them all over the country. All we have to do is thaw and serve; or thaw, warm and serve.

They are not exactly calorie-free (at 500-plus for a lemon tart) but what great dessert is? I tried the Duos, tiny layered parfaits (\$7 for four) made with either chocolate or fruit mousse. Yum. I also tried a Triple Mousse Cake (\$7.50 for two), and the lemon tart (\$5.50 for two.) All of Galaxy's desserts are made with real ingredients; they're trans-fat free and kosher. They can be found at Whole Foods, Andronico's or online.

EXOTIC CHOCOLATE: It was already the chocolate of choice with nearly every baker I've interviewed, now **Valrhona** is going after us home bakers in a big way, seducing us with an expanded line of eating and baking chocolates in gorgeous new packaging.

Packages embellished with colorful foil flowers are filled with Valrhona's trademark chocolate — ultrarich and smooth — in a range of styles, including both 61 and 68 percent dark, 39 percent milk and 34 percent white.

Non-bakers

can nibble on these 8.8-ounce bars, of course, but a better option is to grab one of the **Valrhona Gourmet Creations** that are packed with caramelized nuts, orange or roasted cocoa nibs. These bars are pricey at \$6, but well worth it. If you're a purist on the hunt for a sweet gift, check out the tin boxes of 18 5-gram squares for \$12.

All of the new bars have exotic names such as Caraibe, Guanaja and Tainori — most of which mean little to the non-aficionado as they correspond to the region from which the beans come. But the packages also note the percentage of chocolate that's in the bar. The number doesn't speak to the aromas or flavor nuances, but certainly gives a giant clue as to whether it's the kind of chocolate you like. The line can be found at Draeger's, Andronico's and at Fog City News in San Francisco. To find it online, go to www.chocosphere.com.

BLENDER BLISS: Just to make sure you're completely surrounded in chocolate, I want to give you a rundown on the newest from **Dove Chocolate Discoveries**, which has just introduced some adorable dessert cups that are \$28 for a box of 20 and a **Coco-nut Chocolate Chip Smoothie Mix** (\$18) that is a serious rival to Starbucks' frozen drinks.

They also introduced some great tasting white chocolate for the home pastry

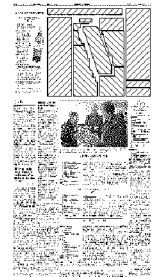
chef, and adorable, minty chocolate bits that are \$10 for 16 ounces.

They're shaped like mini-peanut butter cups and made with deep, dark chocolate. The only trick to these treats is that you have to find them through a representative because the company is structured like Pampered Chef, selling primarily through home parties. Go to www.dove-chocolate-discoveries.com or call 866-922-3683.

TROPICAL SIDE-TRIP: As I'm a sucker for things that smell pretty — and taste sweet — put me on the list of new fans of Skyy's newest infusion, **Skyy Pineapple** (\$15). Pour it neat, pour it on ice cream, pour it with soda water — or get serious and pour it up with a splash of **Caramelized Pineapple** purée from **Perfect Purée of Napa Valley**. It's a trip to the tropics without the bother of tickets and security checkpoints.

Perfect Purée's other new flavors include wild berry, mandarin/tangerine, and a very interesting cocoa fruit, which has a subtle yet complex flavor. They suggest using this one to make a sauce for fish or chicken. The purées are \$30 for a 30-ounce jar or \$17.50 for 15 ounces. They can be found at Whole Foods or Andronico's.

SWEET FINISH: And now, for a worthy finish, I have two suggestions. First is **Domaine Charbay's** newest baby, **Pomegranate Dessert Wine**. It's a sweet, portlike sip that's perfect with nuts, cheese or sweet treats. The wine is \$30 for a 375-ml. bottle. Find it at specialty liquor stores or online at www.domainecharbay.com. If that exceeds your budget, try the new



Otima 10-year Tawny Port from Warre, a light-style tawny that's both bright and sweet — the kind of port that I look forward

to after a long day. It's \$22.

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