

Tasting Chocolate

Now, that you have purchased Marco Paolo Chocolates, it is time to experience a flavor adventure that will send you drifting through luscious layers of complex sensations, or more accurately, a sense-venture (see *What is a sense-venture?*) of chocolate flavor notes, from your first bite to the lingering finish.

Chocolate is a very complex delicacy, especially Marco Paolo Chocolates two layered truffles that are specifically paired to make tasting into a journey of flavors like a musical passage of flavor notes. Like wine, our chocolate truffles are something to be savored. And, just as there are methods used in wine tasting, so there are for chocolate as well.

Most people take a bite of chocolate, chew, and soon swallow, but have they really *tasted* the chocolate? Tasting chocolate (see *Tasting Chocolate*) is different than eating. Start by taking a bite on the side of the truffle from top to bottom so you get a bit of both flavors together, chewing it one or two times, and then stop and let it melt in your mouth to sense the full effect.

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Smell is such an important part of taste, as experts believe between eighty to ninety percent of our perception is derived from smell, or aromas. Our taste buds only play a rudimentary role in flavor tasting because they can detect basically five tastes (see *Basic Tastes Chart*)- sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami. That is why I prefer to use the term *flavor note* when describing chocolate taste.

Flavor Note = aroma + taste, and overall richness

Taste is, more or less, a very individual process. Temperature, texture, smell, appearance, and even one's facility with language, specifically one's ability to name a flavor note, can influence the perceptions of flavors. Recent research has even shown that there are several types of bitterness. Therefore, there is no right or wrong perception of flavor.

You may not detect the same flavor notes as another person, or describe it as it is "supposed" to be. At first, you may only detect a few flavors. However, a vocabulary of descriptive terms for flavors and aromas (see *Guide to Colorful Chocolate Descriptors* link) can help guide your senses to become more specific, or inspire you to be descriptively daring.

Go as far as you like. *Most importantly*, have fun and let your sense fly!

The Basics of Tasting Chocolate

1. Look

2. Touch

3. Listen

4. Smell

5. Taste

1. Look and examine the colors, shine, shape, texture. Is it shiny? A dull grey or beige surface could indicate sugar or fat bloom, either of which will impair the chocolate's full potential.

2. Touch the surface and discover how it feels. Does your finger glide smoothly over the surface or does it feel rough or bubbly? After you bite into the chocolate truffle, notice the texture and how it feels on your tongue.

3. Listen to the sound as you bite into the chocolate. Can you hear the chocolate shell snap or is it soft?

4. Smell...by warming the chocolate slightly with your breath or gently rubbing the outside shell; warmth releases chocolates nuances or flavor notes. These are not the added ingredients such as sugar, fruit, etc, but are chocolates own qualities brought out during the transformation from bean to bar. These tasting notes are typically described by words such as roasted, floral, fruity, spicy, nutty, and earthy. What flavor notes can you smell?

5. Taste the two layers nestled in the chocolate shell. We recommend starting with a top-to-bottom bite to sample both layers simultaneously, then allowing them to melt in our mouth to experience the full bouquet.

- Does the flavor or feeling change over time?
- Try to smell the aromas now. Do they fill your mouth with flavor notes?
- Can you distinguish the five tastes; sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami?

- Try to taste each layer individually and then together again to get the full effect. Does the combination of tastes create the umami effect?
- What words would *you* use to describe your sense-venture?

We hope you'll agree that our zealous adherence to quality has captured the essence and purity of our wholesome ingredients.

Each chocolate truffle is carefully designed and artfully paired to stimulate a rich and rewarding sensory journey of flavors like a musical passage of flavor notes. From the very first bite, the initial flavor experience is like a harmony of notes – that incite a dance upon the palate like notes to a symphony transporting you on an eclectic culinary sense-venture culminating in a lingering finale.

Basic Tastes:

Sweet – rounds out flavors, whereas, acidity sharpens them. When balanced, chocolates multitude of flavor notes are evident. However, a large amount of either taste can overwhelm the other. If you notice sugar immediately, and the sweet notes are annoying, then there is probably too much. Sugar is often used to mask poor quality chocolate.

Sour – typically the taste of acids that tend to sharpen other flavors. In small amounts, sour notes enhance bitterness, but have the opposite effect in large doses. Acidity is detected primarily on the sides of the tongue causing them to curl up. Try smelling something really acidic, like vinegar, and see what happens

Salty – stimulates salivation and enhances other flavors. It diminishes the effects of sour, sweet, and bitter notes. Although, it is one of the first tastes recognized it lingers longer than sweetness.

Bitter – moderates other flavor notes, can have a cooling effect, and promotes a perception of lightness. Often, when people are first asked to describe chocolate they refer to it as bitter. Actually, what they are usually describing, if not sour, is acidity, or astringency if it is poor quality chocolate (astringency has a drying or puckering effect like chewing grape skin).

Umami - is a mild, but lingering after-taste often described as a pleasant mouth-filling “waft”. Specifically, it is the flavor detection of amino acids that is not

pleasant by itself, but when combined with flavors that start with one of the other five basic tastes; sweet, salty, sour, or bitter, create the ultimate journey of flavor through the senses.

When Basic Tastes are combined with aromas, our senses create recognizable flavor notes. Like fine wines, Marco Paolo Chocolates are creatively prepared from the best ingredients, and then artfully mixed to stimulate a rich and rewarding sensory experience on every journey. Each truffle provides an initial flavor experience – a harmony of notes – that then excites a string of flavor notes, culminating in a lingering finish that provides a truly rewarding sensory adventure.

Guide to Colorful Chocolate Descriptors

When first attempting to describe flavor notes it is helpful to have a set of descriptive words to associate with the sensations on the palette. Traditional tasting wheels illustrate flavor notes by combining of aromas and tastes, but lack the fifth taste and the variations of bitter that I like to refer to as richness.

Flavor Note = aroma + taste, and overall richness

Here is a different approach to recognizing flavor based on the unique ways the brain has been found to process the sensations of taste. Did you know that some people see taste as colors? They automatically fuse perceptions from two senses together. For example, when tasting lemon, the person may see the color yellow. Here are some examples of flavor notes categorized into colors. Remember, this is a purely individual process, so flavor notes may appear differently or change color over time.

Can you **see**, **hear** or **feel** flavor notes?

Guide to Colorful Chocolate Descriptors

Brown	Green	Yellow	Orange	Red	Purple	Blue	White
Tobacco	Herbs	Tart/Sour	Sweet/Tangy	Sweet/Tart	Sweet/Sour	Cool	Cream
Black Tea	Vegetal	Lemon	Tropical Fruit	Strawberry	Blueberry	Peppermint	Yogurt
Coffee	Unripe Fruits	Tamarind	Oranges	Raspberry	Currant	Licorice	Cheese
Caramel	Green Tea	Puckery	Pineapple	Red Plum	Blackberry	Anise	Beeswax
Roasted Nuts	Melon	Passion Fruit	Cantaloupe	Pomegranate	Plum	Spearmint	Buttery
Baked	Grass	Yuzu	Mango	Red Wine	Lavender	Eucalyptus	Meringue