

# Taking Chocolate to the Next Level



**C**hocolate containers perfectly designed for your desserts, chocolate shapes emblazoned with your clients' logos, and truffles in dozens of flavors for your VIP and turndown service—such amenities would require a fulltime chocolatier on staff, not to mention a budget to accommodate the necessary equipment.

When they need a special chocolate creation or unusually flavored truffles, savvy chefs turn to Chocolates à la Carte. The company, now celebrating its 20th anniversary, partners with chefs and restaurateurs to create custom chocolate pieces, candies and desserts.

For Stefan Reimer, regional pastry chef for Disney's Yacht and Beach Club Resorts and Boardwalk Resorts, Chocolates à la Carte helps entertain kids with a Mickey Mouse chocolate puzzle, complete with a paintbrush and edible food colors.

Meanwhile, for banquets, Reimer often orders a filmstrip-shaped chocolate piece emblazoned with the client's logo. And a popular room service amenity is a truffle-filled chocolate suitcase bearing the hotel's logo.

"The expectations of guests today are much higher today," says Reimer. "Chocolates à la Carte really knows what a chef wants, and they're very flexible and quick to understand and execute my ideas."

Meanwhile, Rudy Weider, master pastry chef for the San Diego Marriott Hotel & Marina, has worked with Chocolates à la Carte for years. "From day one I was impressed with the company, especially their customer service and how quickly the product arrives," he says.

He's used numerous chocolate shapes to build on event themes and dresses up ice cream and sorbet with colorful chocolate accent pieces or containers. "We often use custom-made logos, because clients like to personalize their desserts," says Weider. "The dessert is always what people remember."

At the MGM Grand Las Vegas, executive pastry chef

Carlos Salazar relies on Chocolates à la Carte to make his own desserts memorable.

Custom-shaped boxes hold chocolates for VIP rooms and turndown service and uniquely designed chocolate bowls add an exotic element to Salazar's dessert presentations.

Salazar is appreciative of how Chocolates à la Carte helps streamline his kitchen prep. "Our labor costs are pretty high here, and making [chocolate pieces] takes a lot of labor," says Salazar. "Chocolates à la Carte can create different shapes and custom items, because they have the machinery. They can make silkscreen items; something like that would cost me a fortune in machinery to make myself. But what I receive from Chocolates à la Carte still looks like something we made in-house."

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Chocolates à la Carte's reach goes far beyond shaped chocolate pieces and custom logos. For instance, the company's new line of Neo-Retro truffles comes in 26 flavors. "This brings Chocolates à la Carte to a new level in offering a wide variety of truffle flavors, covering traditional as well as up-to-date fusion-type flavors," says Stanton Ho, corporate executive chef for Chocolates à la Carte. Traditional offerings include Grand Marnier and Irish Cream, while more unusual offerings include salted buttered cashew,

Japanese green tea, and rompope—a white chocolate ganache flavored with cognac and the Mexican spirit, rompope (an egg brandy).

The company's Gourmet Truffle Pop are ideal for gift shops and in-room amenities. The "two-bite" pops come in flavors like Mocha, Brut and Key Lime.

The company also offers eight frozen desserts, including a Southern pecan tart, a French apple tart, and pineapple upside down cake. Some products are certified kosher, and there is also a sugar-free mousse offering.

With offerings ranging from unusually shaped chocolate pieces to a standout dessert, smart chefs know Chocolates à la Carte is the next best thing to having their own chocolatier.



**ABOVE RIGHT:** "Decadence Chocolate - Framboise" 1 of 8 New Finished Desserts that Chocolates à la Carte has launched this Holiday season.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** From Chocolates à la Carte's retail collection, "Gourmet Truffle Pops". Ganache filled pop's are a favorite for all ages!