

TRAVEL | FOOD & WINE | CULTURE | HISTORY

FRANCE

Britain's best-selling magazine about France

June 2013 | Issue 177

AVIGNON

Enjoy this great foodie hotspot

Grand designs

How Le Havre's Unesco-listed heritage has come of age

Take a break in the stunning Dordogne Valley

Park & ride

Explore France's new national park by bike

Provence

Go on a journey of discovery in the sun-soaked south

PLUS

Street food in Nice & a vineyard visit in the Languedoc

LOIRE VALLEY

- Uncover centuries of art and culture in historic **Angers**
- Visit the village of **Montsoreau** and its antiques market



KATIE DERHAM

The BBC broadcaster on her love of French culture

MOTORHOMES

Try a French motoring holiday with a difference

GASTRONOMY

Meet London's most exciting *chocolatier*

WIN
A Channel crossing for four worth up to £500

BON APPÉTIT

The best of French gastronomy at home and away

Food news | Classic cuisine | Vineyards | Wine



A life-long passion

Easter may be over, but there's a *chocolatier* in London who provides customers with a welcome excuse for chocolate indulgence. **Clare Hargreaves** meets Paris-trained Marc Demarquette, whose exquisite handmade creations have been taking the world of chocolate by storm

If for Proust it was a madeleine, for *chocolatier* Marc Demarquette it was a 'zouzou' chocolate delicately wrapped in gold foil. The luxury handmade chocolates were a treat that Marc's French grandmother would bring from Normandy whenever she visited the Demarquettes' London home. The young Marc eagerly awaited her next visit with the miniature works of art.

Mesmerised by the tastes and textures of those magical chocolates, the boy born in London to a French father and Chinese mother furthered his chocolate education during frequent trips to visit family in Normandy and the Alps.

"I adored the chocolate shops in France, there was something so magical and sparkling about them. I even used to try licking the windows!" recalls Marc. "When we were in the Alps we bought amazing pralines at a *chocolatier* in Les Gets called Schuss. If we needed to get some as a gift to a neighbour I always volunteered to buy them so I could do a bit of sampling!" School friends scorned Marc as they munched their Curly Wurlys, but he was fast developing a taste for the world's finest chocolate.

A dramatic turn

It took a serious incident, though, for those early shivers of gastronomic delight to be turned into an artisan business. Marc took a degree and a masters, then became a high-flying management consultant, jetting around the world seeing clients. Then one evening in 2005, on a night out in London, he was mugged. As he woke up in hospital and realised he wouldn't be going back to work any time soon, he reflected on his priorities. Chocolate flashed into his head. "That would be crazy" I thought, 'so why not?' Marc laughs. "That attack was the best knock of sense I've had in my life. It gave me the chance to do what I really wanted to do."

Eight weeks later Marc had fully

recovered, packed his bags and was travelling to Paris to train at the prestigious Maison Lenôtre, established by Gaston Lenôtre the godfather of modern *pâtisserie*.

“Monsieur Lenôtre was in his eighties then,” recalls Marc. “He would come in for lunch to see his *petits*. I was 30, so not really *petit*, although some of the students were kids just out of school.”

After a year studying *pâtisserie*, *confiserie* and *viennoiserie* under world masters, Marc did a year’s apprenticeship at a chalet near Morzine in the Alps. “I kept thinking ‘Why would I do anything else?’ It was utter paradise. In spring



I listened to birdsong as I worked, and in winter it was like fairyland.”

Back in London Marc began making luxury handmade chocolates with styles and flavours uniquely his own. He is adamant about sourcing his chocolate ethically. That means buying only from countries which do not use child labour, which rules out Ivory Coast and Ghana. Where cocoa producers use child labour their chocolate is cheaper, so their cocoa tends to dominate anonymous blends that are used by less exacting *chocolatiers*. More often than not, Marc buys his cocoa from a single estate that he has checked out personally, such as the Ben Tre cocoa cooperative in Vietnam.

Exotic world tour

The flavours that Marc blends with his chocolates are an exotic gastronomic world tour too. So you’ll find Thai Lemongrass, Sicilian Lemons or Moroccan Mint Tea ganaches, all exquisitely decorated in a rainbow of colours. A recent favourite is his Imperial China range, in which cocoas from Vietnam, Madagascar and Venezuela are blended with White Monkey Jasmine tea. The imperial seal of Emperor Kangxi is



stamped on to each chocolate using cocoa butter. The range reached the Top 50 Foods in Britain in the Great Taste Awards, and is also a nod to Marc’s Chinese mother.

Recently though, the French *chocolatier* has been celebrating his British roots by using British ingredients sourced from their producers. Marc buys cream, for instance, direct from Will Bowman of Guavas Farm in Cornwall.

“Provenance is key. It’s what customers want,” says Marc. “All my ingredients have a story.” The *chocolatier* is also passionate about championing native British fruits, nuts and flowers which

he transforms into caramels in his British Orchard, British Nutkeeper’s and English Garden collections. Cobnuts from Kent, for instance, are used in his Nutkeeper’s Collection.

With Christmas, Valentine’s Day and Easter as key periods, Marc’s busiest time from October to March often sees him working through the night in his ‘lab’ (as he calls his kitchen) to fulfil orders. However, once the rush is over he might grab a couple of days to visit his dad in the Alps – just so long as the trip includes a few decent chocolate shops. 🍫

Order Marc’s chocolates via his website www.demarquette.com

WIN!

We have a Marc Demarquette 30-piece Tasting Selection Box worth £35 to give away. For a chance of winning, simply send your name, address and telephone number to editorial@francemag.com or write us a postcard (address on page 6). Deadline for entries is 4 June 2013. The winner will be drawn at random after the closing date. *FRANCE Magazine* readers can also benefit from a 40 per cent discount when ordering online with the code **FRANCEMAG**, valid from 1 May to 31 June 2013.

