

CHICAGO'S HAUTEST CHOCOLATE

Where to sip the season's most luscious hot chocolate? These Windy City cups are brimming with creative cocoas.

By Amber Gibson

AT FOUR SEASONS HOTEL CHICAGO

Sip chocolate caliente beside Allium's roaring fireplace at Four Seasons Hotel Chicago. Not hot enough? Add a shot of tequila with cinnamon and guajillo chillies. For chocolate-craving emergencies, the Hot Chocolate Doc makes "house calls" to guest rooms, serving bespoke cups from a mobile bar.



Photography: Gallenstock

IN CHICAGO, HOT CHOCOLATE is more than just a drink; it's a tradition. Whether mellow and milky or intensely bittersweet, completely vegan or crowned with whipped cream, the hot chocolate here is as varied and over the top as it should be in a city where the wind chill can hit minus 40°F. Chi-town's only three-star Michelin restaurant, Alinea, greets guests with steaming cups before they're seated. There's even an annual Hot Chocolate 15K

with cocoa at the finish line. Ready for some serious sipping? Here are our favourite Chicago cups.

HOMESTEAD ON THE ROOF

Chocolate ganache infused with espresso is served with extra flair on a dry-ice platter with roasted cocoa nibs and crushed coffee beans. A server pours hot water over the dry ice at the last moment to release an intense mocha aroma. To make the experience even more sinful, toast

espresso marshmallows on cinnamon sticks for stirring. 1924 West Chicago Avenue; 1773/332-2354; www.homesteadontheroof.com

KATHERINE ANNE CONFECTIONS

This fondue-like sipping chocolate is the thickest in the city. It's impossible to choose just one of the 10 flavours, such as salted caramel or white chocolate latte, so get a flight of three minis. Personalise your cocoa by melting in a passion-fruit ginger truffle or salted caramel marshmallow, all made in house. Top it off with fresh whipped cream.

2745 West Armitage Avenue; 1773/245-1630; www.katherine-anne.com

MINDY'S HOTCHOCOLATE

Patrons race across town before closing to indulge in a non-alcoholic after-dinner drink made with Chuao, Callebaut and Mast Brothers chocolate instead of cocoa powder. Or they go for the *affogato*: hot chocolate with a scoop of coffee cocoa-nib ice cream. It's all thanks to James Beard award-winning chef Mindy Segal and her restaurant, which focuses on its namesake while also serving farm-fresh cuisine.

1747 North Damen Avenue; 1773/489-1747; www.hotchocolatechicago.com

TWISTED SPOKE

It's one smooth sip: the sweet, boozy balance of Frangelico, Drambuie and bourbon, with grated Belgian dark chocolate and egg white for thickness. There's also no holding back on the garnish at this biker bar, where peppermint bark and

DRINKING CHOCOLATE FROM KATHERINE ANNE CONFECTIONS

4 ounces (1/4 pound) high-quality chocolate, preferably E. Guittard or similar, chopped
Pinch fine sea salt

1/4 cup cream
1 cup milk
Vanilla extract, cinnamon or orange zest **to taste**

Put **chocolate** and **salt** in a large mug. Heat **cream** to just boiling; pour over chocolate. Microwave for 30 seconds, and then whisk until all chocolate is melted. (Microwave in additional 30-second increments if any chunks of chocolate remain, stirring for 30 seconds before heating again, as chocolate will continue to melt.) Whisk in **milk** (heated to just boiling); then add **vanilla**, **cinnamon** or **orange zest** to taste. Top with a homemade **marshmallow** or **whipped cream**, and enjoy!

toasted marshmallow rev up the richness. 501 North Ogden Avenue; 1312/666-1500

XOCO

This quick-service café roasts and grinds Mexican cocoa beans to make bars of chocolate, then blends them with water or milk, with an optional kick of chilli and allspice. The decadent *champurrado*, served in the fall and winter, is thickened with *masa* and tastes best with freshly fried churros for dipping.

449 North Clark Street and 1471 North Milwaukee Avenue; www.rickbayless.com/restaurants/xoco

Amber Gibson writes for Chicago Magazine, Where Chicago and Rhapsody.



(clockwise from top left)

Hot cocoa is a fine art at Homestead on the Roof; Katherine Anne Confections makes its own marshmallows in house; Mindy's HotChocolate has a devoted following; Xoco crafts hot chocolate Mexican style.

Photography (clockwise from top left) ThinkLeigh Photography, courtesy Katherine Anne Confections, Genevieve Burruss, Arthur Mullen



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See how Four Seasons serves up decadent hot cocoa around the world at taste.fourseasons.com