



# CHOCOLATE – THE REFERENCE STANDARD

THE CHOCOLATE TESTER 2015

The best chocolates and pralines in the world  
What's behind it all and what we can gladly forego

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- ABC of the Chocolate Scene: The manufacturers are listed in alphabetical order with the colloquial names and not according to the full company name resp. brand name. e.g. Chocolat Bonnat is listed under "B", Manufacture Cluizel under "C".

All companies, resp. brands which carry the name of an active Chocolatier or Confectioner, are principally sorted according to the surname. E.g. Oriol Balaguer is listed under "B", Pierre Marcolini under "M".

Companies such as, e.g. Henri Charpentier (listed under "H") or in the meantime also Henri Le Roux (listed under "H") and also William Dean (listed under "W") are not sorted according to the surname, instead according to the full company name.

## THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

With love to my children Clarisse and Melina,  
who both grew up in the midst of cocoa and chocolate.  
With love to Ramona, who supported me with the implementation of this book.

This book is also dedicated to all Chocolatiers and Confectioners  
– they have made this work possible in the first place –  
as well as all chocolate lovers.

I also dedicate this book to my friend Marcel, who died far too early.



## THE AUTHOR



Georg Bernardini stems from an Italian family of restaurant proprietors.

Born on 9 September 1967, he started his career in 1984 as apprentice at the Konditorei (Pâtisserie) Müller-Langhardt in Bonn.

After a brief stopover in Munich at the Konditorei Kreutzkamm in the fall of 1987, mainly in the baumkuchen department, he was drawn to France in October 1987. In Paris he worked as confectioner assistant and bakery manager. To gather further experience, he spent six months as Head Pâtissier at the Restaurant Les Jardins de l'Opéra in Toulouse, which held two Michelin stars at the time.

In November 1992 he established the CCC Confiserie Coppeneur et Compagnon GmbH together with Oliver Coppeneur, which is today headquartered in Bad Honnef, Germany. The first products were presented to the public the following year, on 18 September 1993. In the first years after the foundation, Georg Bernardini was mainly responsible for production, purchasing, export and finances. In the last years of his activity at CCC he was responsible for

purchasing, sales – both domestic and overseas, marketing, design, finances and administration. Project-related he also took over responsibility for product development. His major and most important project was the establishment of the bean to bar production. Starting with the concept, purchasing of machinery, buying the beans, creation of all recipes and design of the packaging, all the way to marketing, everything was carried out under his direction. As per 30 June 2010 Georg Bernardini retired as partner of the Confiserie Coppeneur.

Thanks to his 27 years of experience in all major sectors, Georg Bernardini has comprehensive knowledge of the chocolate industry. In this book, exclusively product categories, which he produced himself during his active period, will be discussed and evaluated.



## INTRODUCTION

A not insignificant influence on my professional career was exerted by the gastronomic revolution in the 1970s. My father was a trained master painter and decided – together with my mother – from one day to the next, to open a restaurant near Bonn in the tranquil place of Rolandseck on the Rhine in 1976. In the beginning, my father cooked Mediterranean cuisine, mainly with Sardinian and Southern French influences. Garlic was hardly known in Germany at the time and often frowned on. Time and again my parents had to remove graffiti in vibrant colors from the house façade and repaint it. Often three-quarters of the surface were covered with comments such as "Careful garlic cooking!" In the second restaurant, at the beginning of the 1980s in Bonn, there were already major influences from the Nouvelle Cuisine. During this time, I permanently got to know extraordinary, novel and high-quality raw materials and discovered a fascinating world of tastes and flavors. Sweet dishes and desserts played a subordinate role in my parents' restaurant, as my father didn't pay them any attention. My German mother was responsible for the desserts and contributed a lot of passion into their preparation as well as always letting me taste her creations. That time shaped me and my taste lastingly and awakened the passion for culinary delicacies in me.

At some point, the time of Nouvelle Cuisine was over but still had a lasting influence. It was a similar phenomenon with high-quality wine, cheese, balsamic vinegar or olive oil. All at once they were literally in everyone's mouth for a time, until a new orientation started and one followed another culinary trend.

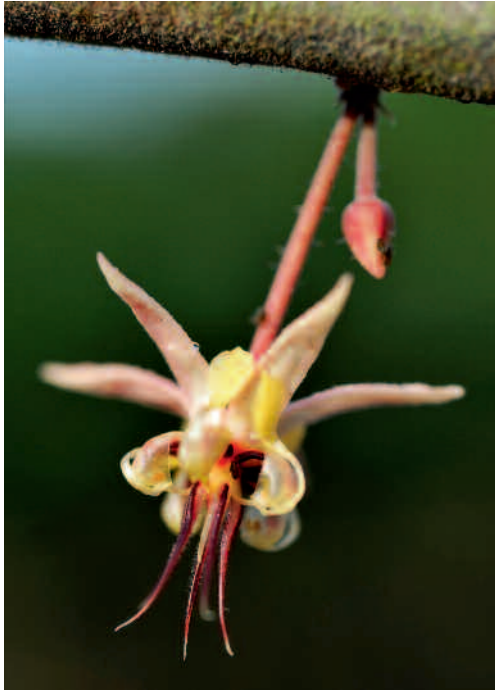
There is, however, a common factor for all these temporarily occurring trends: they have left a lasting impression, made a sustainable contribution towards food culture and, as a rule, promoted the quality level and acceptance by consumers of high-quality and expensive foods. High-quality chocolate products underwent a

similar turnaround over the past years. In the mid-1990s it wasn't rare to see a bar of chocolate offered for 29 Pfennig. Only very few Chocolatiers perceived the cocoa bean as a fine natural product at the time and processed it correspondingly. Fine Chocolatiers who were established on the market were a minority. Confectionery, especially truffles, had a much higher place value than a bar of chocolate. Through clever brand strategies, especially Belgian pralines enjoyed an excellent reputation in Germany as well. Exotic, creative and visionary creations, as they are commonplace these days, simply didn't exist – neither for chocolate nor for confectionery. The few attempts by visionary Chocolatiers and Confectioners in Germany



remained shelf warmers in the mid-1990s. Especially in France, the Chocolatiers and Confectioners were able to establish themselves slowly, with the new interpretation of chocolate but in particular confectionery, at this time.

With the start of the new century, the world of chocolate turned appreciably more fascinating in Germany. Many Confectioners began to experiment. Little by little these new confectionery creations conquered the specialist chocolate shops. The French movie 'Chocolat' with Juliette Binoche and Johnny Depp gave the whole thing a boost in 2000/2001. Nonetheless



Cocoa blossom

it took until about 2003/2004, before the modern Confectionery shop was able to establish itself and a true chocolate boom began. Single origin, handmade, flavored and also drinking chocolates were the “Stars of Media and People” from then on. The more cocoa content, the better, the more daring a filling, the more attention it received.

Confectionery, however, was now almost ignored by the end consumer and did not participate in the boom. At that time, no German enterprise specialized in the manufacture of chocolate straight from the bean (Bean-to-Bar). At this time, the trend towards single origin chocolate was identified by only one German enterprise, namely Rausch, and indeed shaped it lastingly. However, this manufacturer turned away from the specialized trade very early on and supplied mainly supermarkets and discounters. The market for flavored chocolates in Germany and

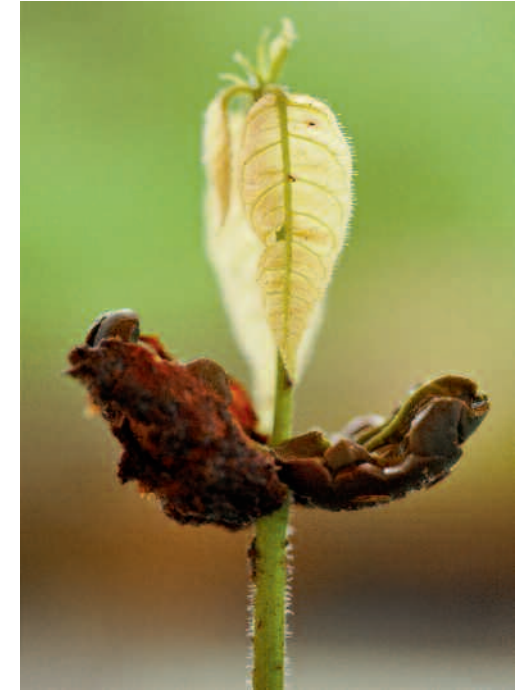
worldwide was left to foreign Chocolatiers unconditionally and uncontested. And these did their work really well. 2005 was the year of the major breakthrough. The years 2006, 2007 and 2008 were the “boom” years. Whatever hit the market was avidly imbibed and new things were demanded faster and faster. The prices for special chocolates exploded and the diversity became continuously larger. It seemed that there was no limit to the top. Since then, new companies edged onto the market permanently, all of them creating numerous new products. Many new companies generated a creative ‘enrichment of the market – some were and are only copycats without own creativity, vision or finesse and with medium or even poor product quality at excessive prices.

At the beginning of 2009 one could feel that the market was changing again. The first kink in the chocolate trend came quite abruptly and many manufacturers were surprised by the downturn in demand. In the course of the year, the downturn stabilized to a tolerable level. But then came the worldwide financial crisis and a further downturn had to be registered. An early clue was the raw material market. The common grade cocoa broke records again and again on a monthly basis and was as expensive as never before. At the same time, the market for fine cocoa had collapsed downright, the prices for best cocoa varieties had declined by up to 30 %. From 2010 onwards, the market recovered and the new revolution began.

Within a few years, far more than one hundred new Bean-to-Bar companies established themselves and at least one new one is added weekly.

This new trend and further trends such as Raw Chocolate or vegan chocolate have revitalized the market again. Gratifying is that many countries on all continents participate in these new trends.

The chocolate market with its impressive diversity and the often very high quality was never as interesting as it is today. The chocolate boom of more than ten years ago has toned down, but it has – similar to other trends before that – left something behind which will remain: a chocolate culture at the highest level and recently paired with a desire to strike out in new directions. The curiosity and innovation machinery has reached a new level on an unprecedented scale – worldwide. All conventions which existed in the chocolate industry were thrown overboard and experiments are conducted come hell or high water. A gigantic playground for Chocolatiers and Confectioners, a paradise for consumers.



Germinated young plant of the Cocoa tree

## THE IDEA BEHIND THE BOOK AND THE NEW BOOK TITLE

As there was no guideline or handbook with comprehensive product tests and recommendations for the chocolate market and the producers available so far, I tried to fill this gap in 2012 with my first edition of “The Chocolate Tester.” Due to the great success and the high acceptance, especially in the chocolate sector, one can assume that I did quite a good job.

The first issue was out of stock within four weeks, dozens of different media, radio, TV, print, blogs, etc. reported about the book. It was described as the “The Standard Work for

Chocolate” and as the “Chocolate Bible,” I was often titled as “The Chocolate Guru”. In May 2014 “The Chocolate Tester” was honored with the Gourmand Cook Book Award for the world’s best chocolate book.

I have written the new issue as a result of the huge change in the chocolate scene. If 271 brands with approx. 2,700 products from 38 countries were represented in the first book, the new issue treats 550 brands with 4,000 products from 70 countries.





I am sure that the question will be raised why I have changed the title of the book and “aspire” to call my book “The Standard Work.” There are two major reasons for this:

1. The general tenor about the book was and is, that it is a Standard Work, resp. an Encyclopedia of Chocolate. Literature critics such as e.g. Denis Scheck or gastronomy critics like Jürgen Dollase, but also my valued readers and also the specialist retailers describe the first issue in this way.
2. There is no comparable work to date and I dare to doubt that there will ever be a crazier person who will surpass this work in its current extent. It is simply impossible to test so many products or even more in an acceptable time. One of the main problems is that the tests have to be carried out within a manageable time so that they don't lose topicality. This work is most likely for eternity in both its scope and exhaustiveness.

I completed the book on 31 March 2015. From 1. April 2015 I have dedicated myself to a new project, which also comprises the manufacture of chocolate straight from Bean-to-Bar and of confectionery. Therefore, I will only be available as “Chocolate Tester” for a limited period of time after publication of this book. A third, revised version will in all likelihood not be published.

The selection of the brands and companies discussed in this book was my sole decision. No company had to pay for this, and no one was asked to send products without being paid for them. Of course I accepted free samples to be able to keep the costs for this book in acceptable limits. The mailing of free samples has, of course, no influence on the assessment of the products.

## THE CONCEPT OF THE BOOK

Every brand included in my book is portrayed – depending on how intensely it influences the market, in more or less detail. Brands of particularly good or bad products receive more attention independent of their size and significance for the chocolate market. There will always be exceptions, I cannot and do not wish to subject myself to a rigid rule. When introducing the individual brands, I only deal with their history in detail when they are of special interest. Once in a while I also talk about my personal experiences with the companies or their owners, founders or employees.

Only companies which are present in retail with their own brand are considered in this book. This book does not concentrate on the best products but comprises all quality levels which are available in retail. I have not excluded a single brand due to the quality of its products. Of course it would have been easier and more pleasant for me to consider only the best brands with a transparent communications policy. However, my goal is not to sing the praises of the chocolate scene, but to offer the reader a comprehensive market overview – with all its positive but also negative sides.

It is also not my intention to unsettle the reader with the lack of a brand. This would, for example, allow the assumption that I don't know the one or other brand or do not appreciate its quality. Quite assuredly, one will miss the one or other brand in the book. The simple reason is that I had to draw a line in the case of 550 brands.

Of course, time did not permit a personal visit to all manufacturers, although I travelled to Australia, Japan, USA, Austria, Italy, France, Switzerland, England, Belgium, the Netherlands and to some German cities to procure the products.

### The product categories

I have tested products of the following categories:

1. Dark Chocolate pure
2. Milk Chocolate pure
3. White Chocolate pure and flavored
4. Flavored Chocolates
5. Filled Chocolates and Bars
6. Nougat
7. Confectionery

