

LISTS OF THE BEST

Ranking lists are a bit of a tricky thing – they turn into a target for anyone who finds his favorite product not at the front, instead perhaps far towards the end. The concerned manufacturers will also be either happy or upset. Even if many rating criteria are objective (ingredients lists, raw material selection, etc.), there are still adequate subjective criteria to offer a large point of attack. Some may not be able to understand the one or other decision and understand a bad placing as provocation. However, I would like to distance myself clearly from such a thing. None of my ratings should be understood as provocation or serve another such goal. Nevertheless I have decided to also reflect my great efforts and the amount of work which is involved in this book in ranking lists.

I have repeatedly observed a phenomenon. Almost no manufacturer has a constant and always identical quality. Especially with fresh confectionery and such with a short shelf-life, the quality fluctuations can be considerable. With a confectionery that has a shelf-life of only four weeks, it is an immense difference whether I taste a confectionery with an age of three days or of four weeks.

The perception of the products is also not always the same. Time and again I have tested products of the same batch again or the same product from a newer batch completely new.

In the rarest of cases was the result of the rating identical. This is not only related to the fact that these are natural products with corresponding fluctuations. The circumstances of the tasting were also different in parts. Absolutely identical conditions are not possible on principal. Even a changed emotional state can call forth nuances for the rating during the tasting. All possible influences, such as e.g. constitution, age of the products, sequence of the tasting, etc. will also influence the result, at least in nuances.

E.g. the last tasting of the Domori-Chuao 70 % chocolate resulted in a rating of 98.05 Points. At the first rating, the mark was 97.20 Points and in the first issue of the Chocolate Taster it was 97.60 Points. At the next tasting I had awarded a different mark again. That is just as certain as the fact that the rating, if there were no dramatic changes in the manufacture of the chocolate, will always move at this level.

Therefore I have decided not to specify any ranking in my List of the Best, instead to name my Top 25 brands/manufacturers and 10 preferred products for each product category respectively. Here, the ranking can change almost completely at any time as the quality differences are marginal. Amongst my Top 25 brands/manufacturers there are two-three manufacturers which are borderline and also could have received a very good rating of 5 or 6.

Overall summary according to product categories:

With these lists I also do not wish to conduct a final rating, instead I am listing my favorite products in alphabetical order. I have not stayed explicitly with the highest rating with these lists, instead with what I liked best personally. These lists therefore have a certain subjective stake.



Pure dark chocolates

With a dark chocolate, a good ingredients list is, of course, very important for me. I like chocolates best which contain exclusively cocoa and sugar. Nonetheless my top 15 contain the one or other chocolate which also contains added cocoa butter.



Pure dark chocolates

Askinosie	Cortés, Honduras	70 %
Domori.....	Chuao	70 %
Domori.....	Porcelana	70 %
Idilio.....	12imo Finca Torres	72 %
Minimal Bean to Bar Chocolate	Madagascar	85 %
Patric Chocolate.....	Rio Caribe	70 %
Pump Street Bakery.....	Ecuador 100 % Guantupi 2013	
Rogue Chocolatier	Balao	75 %
Rogue Chocolatier	Porcelana	80 %
Rogue Chocolatier.....	Sambirano	70 %
Sirene Chocolate.....	Ecuador	73 %
Sirene Chocolate.....	Madagascar	73 %
SOMA Chocolate Maker.....	Chuao	70 %
SOMA Chocolate Maker	Three Amigos	70 %
Wellington Chocolate Factory.....	Peru Norandino	70 %

Pure milk chocolates:

The ingredients list is also important to me with milk chocolates. However, here I do not follow such a “correct” sequence of the ingredients list. The end result must be correct and the sweetness must not be too dominant. In the meantime, there is quite a number of excellent milk chocolates which could also appeal to a chocoholic.

Pure milk chocolates:

Artisan du Chocolat	Buffalo Milk Chocolate	40 %
Askinosie	Malted Moo Moo	55 %
Black Mountain Chocolate	Mountain Milk	53 %
Cacao Atlanta	Milk 40 - Blend	29



The Chocolate Tree	Dark Milk Peru	48 %
DV Artisan Chocolate.....	Dark Milk Uganda	51 %
French Broad Chocolates.....	Riverbend Malted Milk Chocolate	45 %
Fruition.....	Marañón Milk	68 %
Hotel Chocolat.....	Peru Pichanaki	75 % Milk
Idilio.....	15nto Idilio con Leche 42% Orinoco	
Leone	Latte Alta Qualità	
Manufacture Cluizel	Mangaro Lait	50 %
Metiisto Artisan Chocolate	Madagascar Dark Milk	56 %
Patric Chocolate.....	Signature Dark Milk	
Zotter	Labooko Nicaragua	50 %

Pure and flavored white chocolates:

As there are still relatively few white chocolates from Bean-to-Bar chocolate manufacturers, I am also including flavored white chocolates in this list.



Pure and flavored white chocolates:

100%ChocolateCafe	28 - Hokkaido White	
Amedei.....	Bianco (pur)	
Bernachon	Ivoire (pur)	
Čokoládovna Troubelice	František Bačík - Bílá	40 % (pur)
Danta Chocolate.....	White with Cacao Nibs	
Domori	Biancomenta	
Domori.....	Biancoliquirizia	
Fruition	Toasted White	38 %
Original Beans.....	Edel Weiss Dominikanische Republik	40 %
Pierre Marcolini	Chocolat Blanc (pur)	
Vestri.....	Girone dei Golosi Bianco Pistacchi	
Vivani & Bjørnsted.....	Weisse Vanille (pur)	
Zotter	Labooko Erdbeere	
Zotter.....	Labooko Maracuja	
Zotter	Weißer Schokolade (pur)	

Flavored dark chocolates:

Flavored chocolates also contain chocolates which were flavored with cocoa nibs. The selection of flavored chocolates is very large and varied. This product type is certainly the largest and for the trade the most important revenue driver.

Flavored dark chocolates:

Åkesson's	Madagascar Ambolikapiky Plantation 75% Trinitario Cocoa & "Wild" Voatsiperifery Pepper
Choco Del Sol.....	Trinitario 75 % Kakao-Nibs
Chocolate Santander	Dark Chocolate 100% Colombian Coffee Bits 70 %
DV Artisan Chocolate.....	Cinnamon and Chilli 70 % Dark
Idilio	6xto Selección Amari Merideña 72 % Cacaonibs
Pump Street Bakery.....	Sourdough & Sea Salt 66 %
Rio Napo	73% Cacao Dark Chocolat mit Kaffeessplittern
SOMA Chocolate Maker	Stratus Bar
William Dean.....	Fruit & Filberts
Wilkie' s Chocolate	Amazonas 75 % with Cocoa Nibs

Flavored Milk Chocolates:

Especially for consumers who do not like to eat dark chocolate that much, flavored milk chocolates play a major role. The selection of products is staggering here as well.

Flavored Milk Chocolates:

Amedei	Noccioline
Chocolat Bonnat	Chocolat au Lait et aux Noisettes
Domori	Lattesal 45 %
El Ceibo	Bolivian Speciality Coffee in Dark Milk Chocolate 60 %
Fruition.....	Dark Milk with Flor de Sal 56 %
Manufacture Cluizel.....	Lait Éclats Caramel Beurre Salé 45 %
Nobile Cioccolato	42 % Milkschokolade Zitronen
Scharffen Berger	Milk Nibby 41 % Milk Chocolate
Theobro.ma	Theo MM 58 %
Vestri	Girone die Golosi Latte con Uvetta 34 %



Nougat:

I have neglected nougat products somewhat during my tastings. The flood of Bean-to-Bar manufacturers induced me to focus on their products. Nonetheless there are also some high-quality nougat products from Bean-to-Bar manufacturers.



Nougat:

D. Barbero.....	Ciocolato Gianduia con Noccioline
D. Barbero	Nocciolone
Domori	Giandujotto
Domori	La Crema Gianduia
François Pralus	Barre Infernale
Guido Castagna	Crema di Noccioline +55
Silvio Bessone	Gianduiotti
Theobro.ma.....	Theo-Haselnuss-Aufstrich mit Stücken
Vestri	Tortino di Firenze
Zotter	Nougatus Paranuss

Bars:

Bars are a very rare product from Bean-to-Bar manufacturers. That surprises somewhat as it happens to be a popular product type with consumers.



Bars:

Café Pernsteiner	Criollo Crunch
Clement Chococult	Mango-Mascarponecreme
CoCouture.....	Irish Coffee 55 %
CoCouture.....	Japanese Cherry Sencha 70 %
Lillie Belle Farms	The Most Awesome Chocolate Bar EVER!
Pierre Marcolini	Plaisir Five O'Clock
Schell Schokoladenmanufaktur.....	Gefüllte Schokolade Haselnussgeist
Schell Schokoladenmanufaktur	Gefüllte Schokolade Sauerkirsch
Schell Schokoladenmanufaktur	Gefüllte Schokolade Single Malt Whisky
Venchi	Prendivoglia Nocciolato Gianduia

Confectionery:

Selecting my favorites among the confectionery was the most difficult task for me. 120 varieties received a rating of 90.00 Points or more. During my selection of the best 20 varieties I kept very close to the ratings. The worst rating among the best twenty is 94.20 Points. The following 20 varieties have ratings between 93.10 and 94.20 Points. Exclusively confectionery in the traditional sense was considered and no dried fruits or candied fruits covered in chocolate.



Confectionery:

Christopher Elbow	Fleur de Sel
Demarquette	Imperial China
Demarquette	Passion Fruit
Demarquette	Royal Merina
Es Koyama	No 1 2 Colombies
Es Koyama	No 4 Praliné aux Fruits de la Passion et au Matcha
Fruition	Brown Butter Bourbon Caramels
La Maison du Chocolat	Bacchus
La Maison du Chocolat	Rigoletto Noir
Le chocolat de H	No. 3 Ohagi au Sésame
Max Chocolatier	Elvesia 74 %
Nobile Cioccolato	No 3 Mit Grüner Fee aus dem Val de Travers und Arabica-Kaffee
Patrick Roger	Dehli
Patrick Roger	Maracana
Patrick Roger	Valparaiso
Patrick Roger	Trinidad & Tobago
Pierre Hermé	Mogador
William Curley	Orange & Balsamic Vinegar
Zotter	Blätterkrokant
Zotter	SauerkirschEndorphin



OVERALL SUMMARY MANUFACTURERS:

For me, the quality of the products is primarily decisive. But also other factors such as communication and transparency, but also honesty play a superordinate role for me. Diversification also plays a role but just like the price, more of a subordinate one. 25 brands (24 manufacturers) have received the best mark of 6 of 6 cocoa fruits for the overall performance from me. This includes 12 Bean-to-Bar manufacturers and 11 confectionery manufacturers, but also a couverture-manufacturers and a private label brand. Felchlin stands representative for high-quality chocolate, Idilio for a high-quality private label brand.

These are the following brands and manufacturers (in alphabetical order):

Bellion (Chocolaterie Atelier Bellion)

The confectionery has turned out very well and the first samples of his Bean-to-Bar chocolate are very promising. His attitude to quality, ethics and transparency were decisive for selecting him to the Top 25. A last demonstration is, however, still due with the market-ready chocolates.

Curley (William Curley)

The quality of the confectionery is simply world-class and also decisive for the selection to the Top 25, even if there is some lack of innovations.

Demarquette

Selection of raw materials, communication, transparency and ethical idea. All of this reflects in the excellent quality of the confectionery. A selection for the Top 25 was easy and almost a matter of course.

Domori

Pioneer, quality leader and visionary. The selection to the Top 25 was and is indisputable.

Elbow (Christopher Elbow)

The long-term always very high world-level quality of the confectionery was decisive for the selection to the Top 25. A disgrace that Christopher Elbow wasn't already represented in the first issue.

Es Koyama

Every confectionery has a story which gives the enjoyment of the products a new dimension. The quality of the confectionery is probably the best that is currently available on the market.

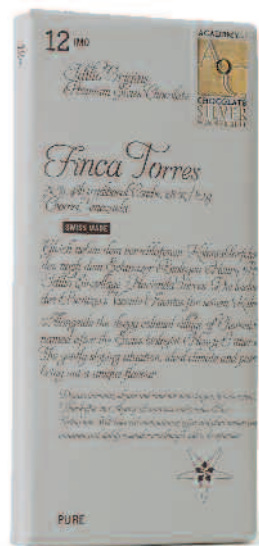
Fruition

One of the few newcomers who have immediately made it to the Top 25. The chocolates are, just like the confectionery, simply sensational. For a newcomer, Fruition has a pretty impressive selection of products.



Hévin (Jean Paul Hévin)

Is one of the Top 25, of course, even if weaknesses in the quality can be seen occasionally. But he has characterized the French Confectionery sustainably and his products still offer lots of pleasure.



Idilio (Felchlin)

The owners of Idilio have a particular knack when selecting the cocoa beans which are simply processed to world-class chocolate by Felchlin. Felchlin distinctly sets itself apart qualitatively from all other private label manufacturers.

La Maison du Chocolat

An institution and co-responsible for the modern-classic confectionery. Always of a very high quality level. Even if there is a slight lack of progressivity and innovations.

Le Chocolat de H

The modern interpretation of confectionery. Similar to Es Koyama, each individual confectionery has a background. This is how modern confectionery tastes, this is how modern confectionery looks.

Marcolini (Pierre Marcolini)

Very versatile and with a very convincing quality with everything he produces. Willing to learn and open for criticism. Surely a role model for many young creatives.

Morin (Chocolaterie A. Morin)

Has conducted an unbelievable development over the last years. Hungry for knowledge, willing to learn and with the courage to strike out in new directions. It is not understandable why he receives so little attention in the chocolate world.

Nobile Cioccolato

The confectionery is simply outstanding. Nobile doesn't put itself in the foreground, instead its suppliers of the always excellent ingredients. Exemplary.



Original Beans (Felchlin)

Not all cocoa beans are outstanding but the commitment of the owners of Original Beans is exemplary and the processing by Felchlin superior.

Patric Chocolate

Even if Patric founders a little with the flavored chocolates, he can handle cocoa beans and is therefore entitled to be among the Top 25.

Pump Street Bakery

The start of the Bean-to-Bar production was so impressive that I cannot do anything other than select the company for the Top 25. The coco beans of the tested chocolates were of very different origin, the results always outstanding.

Recchiuti (Michael Recchiuti)

One of the pioneers of modern confectionery in the USA and through the continuously high level an established part in the chocolate world.

Roger (Patrick Roger)

Represents the modern French confectioners like no other Frenchman. With a grandiose raw material selection and their perfect processing to confectionery.

Rogue Chocolatier

An exceptional talent. Each chocolate has the level of world-class and after an initial finding phase in the first years, he has morphed into the America quality leader.

SOMA Chocolate Maker

Not only impresses with very good chocolates but also with superb confectionery. The whole concept of SOMA is harmonious. AT the same time SOMA also manages Cafés and produces further patisserie products.

Wild Sweets® (By Dominique & Cindy Duby)

DC Duby = Science which is implemented in the confectionery. At Wild Sweets there is not just the production, instead there is research and development, always on the lookout for new ways of being creative. The Bean-to-Bar manufacture was therefore almost a matter for course.

William Dean

The quality is of a very high level and very similar to the quality which I tested back in 2011. I do miss



the development and innovations a little. A somewhat marginal rating with 6 of 6 cocoa fruits, even if the quality of the confects really, really appealed to me.

Zotter

Even if time and again there are products which I don't like, the placement among the Top 25 is so much matter of course as it is for only very few brands and companies, similar to Domori almost indisputable.

As one can see, there are very few Bean-to-Bar manufacturers among the Top 25. This can be explained with the fact that until recently there were few Bean-to-Bar manufacturers and the newcomers have a limited range at their command and also have to prove their skill long-term.

In the case of the confectioners, however, it is logical that these are represented in such a great number among the Top 25. They had a few decades more time to develop themselves and reach this quality level.