

Flashy diamonds are pretty, but I prefer simple jewelry with quirk. Long, lush bubble baths are nice once in a while—hot showers are more my style. Fancy resort getaways are always fun, though I find the greatest pleasure in turning on a good movie and indulging in a meal cooked by my hubby at home. My image of luxury doesn't have wheels or require a safe. My idea of luxury: Chocolate. In a cake, in a shake. In a truffle, in a trifle. Chocolate is my ultimate opulence. As we celebrate the extravagances the Valley has to offer, we salute the treat we have all treasured since we were tots—from the taste of your first Tootsie Roll to the wine-infused ganache you nibble when you're "in the neighborhood" of your favorite chocolatier.

CHOCOFIN CHOCOLATIER

Like many men, Louis Mirabella presented his wife, Denise, with a box of chocolates on their first Valentine's Day together. Unlike many men, Louis made each of the truffles that graced the gift by hand—and the couple is now dishing out such mouthwatering delicacies to an adoring Valley crowd. Five years ago, Louis, originally a self-taught chocolate maker, and Denise, a culinary school graduate, opened Chocofin Chocolatier in Fountain Hills and sold out of their gourmet goods on their first day of business. Now, they spend between 40 and 50 hours per week in the kitchen to bring all-natural sweets made from scratch (nearly 30 flavors of European-style chocolates as well as cakes and other goodies) to Phoenixians. Even for the Mirabellas, who are constantly surrounded by the fruits of their labor, chocolate is a luxury. "We don't eat our own chocolates every day," says Louis, who considers the dark chocolate Onyx his favorite creation. "It is a special thing for us to do." 480.836.7444, www.chocofin.com.

CHATHAM'S FINE CHOCOLATES

For Chatham Kitz and his wife, Jennie, co-owners of Phoenix-based Chatham's Fine Chocolates, going to work is more than just another day at the office. "We are die-hard chocoholics," he says. "It is a genetic disease in my family—we all have the condition of chocoholism." Chatham imports high-quality chocolates from all over the world, stocking as many as 220 varieties on any given day—the selection even includes hand-painted beauties from Indiana's Ghyslain; and Vin Santo, a ganache from Italian chocolatier Amedei made of holy wine blessed by the pope. Though such delicacies come at a premium, you can't put a price on chocolate-induced perks. "It triggers the same endorphins in your brain as being in love," he says. "It doesn't matter if you are 2 or 102, everyone loves chocolate." (Chatham does jokingly note that there are three people in Arizona who don't enjoy chocolate—and he has met each of them as they purchased gifts for the chocolate lovers in their life.) 480.443.7752, www.chathamfinechocolates.com.

SEVEN SISTERS SWEET SHOP

For the past four years, Christine Kim has headed Seven Sisters Sweet Shop in Scottsdale's Grayhawk neighborhood, spending day after day handcrafting fine Belgian chocolates. Though this former Bostonian adores her scrumptious career, it isn't as simple as she initially expected. "I am fascinated with food," says Kim, who recently added the same frozen yogurt carried by L.A.'s Pinkberry hot spots to her yummy lineup. "I thought chocolate would be much easier to cook than regular food. It turned out to be [just as] hard." Kim says that her award-winning toffee and caramels can be the most time-consuming to make; she also counts those creations as two of her customers' choice indulgences. "Sweets make [people] happy, and [chocolate] smells good—and tastes good, of course," Kim says. 480.585.6103, www.7sisterssweetshop.com.