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*If there's one food item that can
really lay claim to being the food of love,
it's chocolate.*

THE FOOD OF LOVE

Shakespeare once suggested that music was the food of love. These days, chocolate has a powerful claim to having usurped it as the new food of love – not to mention the new black, the new Friday, the new 50, the new 80 and the new rock 'n' roll as well.

It all started with the sexing up of food itself. A few years ago, you were a genius if you could mix up a prawn cocktail sauce and translate half a dozen items on a French menu. These days, even if you own only a kettle and a toaster, many people still expect you to be able to rustle up something to inspire Gordon Ramsay, be fluent in 14 different menu languages, and be able to spot a ripe avocado at 20 paces.

A rudimentary knowledge of food is no longer socially acceptable. People do not simply ask you where you went on holiday; they want to know what and where you ate when you went on holiday, mostly so that they can ask if you visited that charming little deli in the old town that weaves its own tiramisu and crochets its own olive oil. People don't just want to know how long the beef was

hung; they want to know the noble beast's name, its family tree, which field it was kept in and whether it was Jethro or his backward brother Silas who killed it. In the same way, they now want to know which bean has been used in the composition of your chocolate, and on which estate in which country it was grown, and when.

There could be many reasons why this sort of knowledge is now so desirable. Perhaps it sets you apart as a world traveller with an unquenchable curiosity and a wealth of fascinating experience behind you. Maybe it's just because it hints that you have a deep fund of knowledge about many things. Whatever the reason, there's one undeniable fact: it makes chocolate a wonderfully rich subject for the art of bluffing.*

It's cool, it's sexy, and it's available in myriad forms everywhere. It can be accessible or exclusive, cheap or expensive. It's produced all over the world and has a wealth of history behind it. It is said to possess all sorts of qualities, from aphrodisiac to energy booster. The process to turn it from bean to bar is fantastically complex. It is, therefore, the perfect food for the bluffer.

Over the next 120 pages or so you'll find everything you need to know to impress friends, family, colleagues, romantic interests, passing chefs and patronising waiters. Whether you're a regular consumer of French luxury chocolate Valrhona or if your knowledge begins and ends with a deep fried Mars Bar, you'll be able to hold your own in any chocolate-related situation. Even better, should you wish (for whatever reason) to do the additional research required without eating lots of different chocolate, this book will allow you to