

AT one time, no one was allowed entry into the hallowed precincts, read the chocolate section, of the Taj Mahal hotel in Mumbai, lest you learnt their secret of making soft, creamy, delicious chocolates. Chandana Shah who did her internship with them, a decade ago, didn't find it amusing then as she was asked to wrap kilos of chocolates every day, till she could do it blindfolded! "The same thing happened when I did the confectionery

bars of chocolates, called couvertures or block chocolates, till I got a hang of the heating, and tempering. Learning to make truffles, which are basically soft centres made of creams — I use soya instead of cream, for health reasons — was tough but I loved what I did, and was determined to get it right," she grins.



DARK TEMPTATIONS

Chandana Shah, Bangalore's modest chocolatier, speaks to Madhuri Velegar K

course from the Dadar Hotel Management Catering College. For months we were asked to make bread rolls and sponge cakes; as a result, I hate making any of them today!"

Delicious, Soft Centres

Today, Chandana Shah is a reputed chocolatier who makes sweet nothings under the label 'Jus' Trufs'. These tiny pieces, which are infused with roasted almond shavings, orange essence, caramel or wine, are simply delicious! Neatly packed in silver and purple-ribboned boxes, her chocolates which are set in moulds — 'I love you' and 'I miss you' for the recent Valentine Day fest — were a huge sellout! She says, "There's a growing demand for flavoured and praline chocolates, and those with liqueur-filled centres, but most people prefer to try out an assortment. I add new flavours depending on the season and my experiments in the kitchen."

Experiments Galore!

She continues, "Making chocolates wasn't even part of our curriculum; I learnt to make them much later, after studying books, experimenting with umpteen

An Expert Chocolatier

Within two years of chocolate making, and offering free samples at stores during festive seasons, Chandana became a household name. "It took just one company to help me spread my product across a large base, because whoever they gifted the chocolates to, came back to me for more." 'Jus' Trufs became favourites of institutions like Standard Chartered, Citibank, Merrill Lynch, Puravankara Builders and Infosys to name a few. One can also order her new brand called Jus' Chocolate from Fab Mall and indiainfo.com. Now Chandana is set to go to Belgium or Switzerland to do an advanced course in chocolate making to fine tune her craft. Indians, informs Chandana, eat foreign chocolates six months later, while Cadbury's are made to last a long time on shelves, therefore compromising on taste.

So it's left to chocolate makers like Chandana who use foreign chocolate blocks, but re-invent them in good ole' Bangalore to hook us for a long time. I for one, am not complaining!

