



## Food Finds

# Life by Chocolate

Self-trained, Chuck Siegel has been in the confectionary business for about two decades.

by Robin Rinaldi , posted on July 26, 2007



There's no secret to making high-quality confections, says Chuck Siegel, founder of three-year-old [Charles Chocolates](#). "You just use exceptional ingredients and are very careful about how you cook them." Well, almost no secrets: At the new Chocolate Bar in the company's Emeryville factory, patrons can sip hot cocoa while gazing through huge windows at the entire candy-making process—except for one part. "The only thing we don't show is the area where we measure the ingredients, so no one can steal our recipes with a camcorder," Siegel says

Everything at Charles—from the fleur de sel caramels sealed in an edible chocolate box to the tea-infused truffles imprinted by a master calligrapher to the triple-chocolate almonds dusted in Valrhona cocoa powder—is handmade. Self-trained, Siegel has been in the business for about two decades (he founded Attivo Confections back when Reagan was president) and is staying in it for good reason, even beyond his company's fourfold growth this past year. Statistics show that the premium-chocolate market continues to skyrocket, due no doubt to its perennial appeal

and, as Siegel describes it, Americans' tendency to "never go back" once they taste the good stuff. "You can't walk two blocks in Paris without finding a phenomenal little chocolate shop, and they're all surviving," Siegel concludes. "We aren't there yet in America. But we're getting there."