

KATHRYN MCKENZIE NICHOLS: GOURMET GADGETS
Silicon Valley Home
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Chuck Siegel
Mandoline slicer/immersion blender
Chocolatier/owner, Charles Chocolates, Emeryville

Although Siegel has made a name for himself as an up-and-coming chocolate artisan, his two favorite tools aren't necessarily for candy making. Siegel is crazy about the mandoline slicer and the immersion blender, two tools that offer chefs a degree of accuracy unmatched by other utensils. "The mandoline is the perfect, perfect tool," says Siegel, who also uses one at home. "For really fine slicing, it's consistent, and so precise." Cutting thin slices of Meyer lemon for embellishing chocolates, for instance, is something the mandolin does very nicely. Siegel also likes his immersion blender, known as a stick blender. These have gotten a bad rap because "many of them that are made for home use are not very good," he says. "A really good one is a phenomenal blending tool." For instance, the immersion blender is ideal for making French-style hot chocolate because it blends without introducing air into the mix. Mandolines retail for \$10 and \$50, while a quality immersion blender will cost between \$60 and \$100.