

## TABLE TALK

### David Bacco

**OCCUPATION:** Chocolatier

**WHERE:** David Bacco  
Chocolats,  
550 Midvale Blvd.  
(in Hilldale)

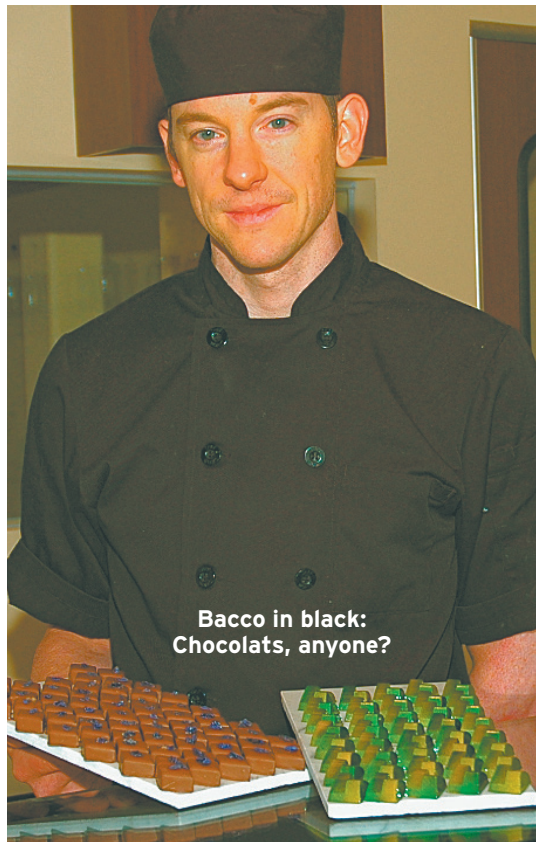
**WHY YOU SHOULD GO:** It's like walking into a pirate's chest full of edible treasures.

**HOW DID YOU COME TO OPEN THE NEW SHOP?** I was already thinking about opening my own shop when Cocoliquot [where Bacco once purveyed his wares] was doing well, but the unfortunate news of its closing pushed me to take the plunge. I wanted a spot on the west side, and I knew Hilldale had some spaces open. I took one look at this location, between Wine Styles and Sushi Muramoto, across the street from Sundance. I knew it would be perfect. We opened on May 21, and sales have been great.

**YOUR CHOCOLATS LOOK LIKE LITTLE JEWELS – WHAT'S YOUR INSPIRATION?** At the restaurant you couldn't really see them before they were served – you ordered them from the menu. The inspiration for the shop design was to put them on display, really show them off. And I've fine-tuned their visual appearance – the shapes and colors. They really pop under the spotlights.

The chocolates are inspired by many things. Nature. Minerals and crystals. Photos from outer space – the Milky Way, the Aurora Borealis and the planets. I get ideas from a walk or an alchemy book; from practicing yoga and tai chi; from food. I'm making Chakra chocolate bars that play off the etheric sciences. Just as one practices yoga to balance, energize and revitalize one's chakras, I'm playing with antioxidant properties of bittersweet chocolate. There are seven bars, for the seven chakras, each with appropriately tonifying nuts, herbs and spices.

The lemongrass citron chocolat is inspired by Thai tom yom soup; the chai ganache obviously comes from tea. The visuals are always tied to the flavors. When rocks are highly polished you can see their inner beauty – their genetic makeup. I feel a strong connection with them. I wanted to bring that to the chocolates, so they seem like crystals or jewels. The finish on the gingered macadamia nut is a yellowish gold with vibrant green – metallic, so you see visual layers as you'd see the mineral impurities embedded in crystal. The honey lavender chocolat has a crystallized violet on top that has a mineral



Bacco in black:  
Chocolats, anyone?

look. There's a hint of violet essence in the petal that lends itself to the lavender flavor and brings the floral elements and the earthiness of chocolate together. I have outer space chocolates in the works. Stay tuned.

**DID YOU GO TO ART SCHOOL?** No, I was never good at drawing. But combining chocolate and cocoa butter and colors clicked for me. As a kid I loved American candy bars, and when I got into the culinary scene, I opened up to chocolate. It became a good medium for me, but my prior training and experience with food was a big part of it, working with complementary and contrasting flavors that you can combine to create a new gustatory experience. With chocolate, I've elaborated on that knowledge with my own sense of style and self-expression.

I'm starting to work with chocolate fashion. It's out there – if you Google it, you'll find lots of images. It's not something I'm going to go into in a big way, but it gives me a chance to combine chocolate with show pieces. You could call them miniature works of art or enlarged chocolates. It's an interesting challenge. For fall fashion week at Hilldale, we're teaming up with one of the clothing stores – I don't know which one yet – to make accessories. Yes, they'll be edible.

– Q&A AND PHOTO BY SUSAN KEPECS

