

Hot Chocolate!

Confectioner Kristen Hard combines the healthy and hedonistic at her decadent new chocolate apothecary


| By Denny Dierckx | Portrait by Neda Abghari |

While working as a private chef on a wealthy Spaniard's sailing yacht, Atlanta native Kristen Hard discovered chocolate in the Caribbean. Sure, the Mayans and Aztecs beat her to the punch about 1,000 years earlier, but "that's when it really took over my life," she says. Hard hovered over women in the markets making sweets and bought their herbs and buttons of cacao. "I didn't know what to do with them, but I was in love with them," she says. "They started piling up in our very small kitchen and the captain said, 'You have to do something with these things,' so I taught myself to make truffles."

When her stint was over, Hard retrieved her beloved King Charles spaniel, Philippe, and returned to the States to study for the LSAT with a heavy heart. "I felt like I was marrying the wrong person," she says. "I was very stressed out

about it and would get up in the middle of the night and make a batch of chocolates. Then one day it hit me: I am not going to law school. I can't."

Today the single 30-year-old pleads the case of chocolate's health

benefits ("People feel really guilty about eating this amazing super food") at Cacao, her new, "very modern and Frenchie" Inman Park chocolate boutique. Inside is a wonderland of Rainforest Alliance-certified "chocolate-covered everything" from cupcakes and ice cream to her K Chocolat line of truffles including the Italian Cowboy (Ily coffee and Woodford Reserve bourbon) and the herb- and spice-infused Azteca Aphrodisia. "It's a secret Caribbean recipe," she says. "It took me months of being friendly with the local ladies in the market to get that!" Cacao, 312 North Highland Avenue, 404.221.2626, www.kechocolate.com. 

KRISTEN'S HOTS

The Italian countryside; Oress and milk at The Chocolate Bar; green packaging; Be Well Atlanta; Ryan Adams; Edith Piaf; latex at Oaxaca.

KRISTEN'S NOTS

The egg; bad service; presentism; meta production for meta consumption.



Kristen Hard, with Philippe, at her Atlanta Be Well chocolate shop.