

# The Patriot Ledger

## Cocoa's hot

Area shops are taking the chill out of winter with to-die-for chocolaty brews

By JODY FEINBERG  
THE PATRIOT LEDGER

Forget the package of Swiss Miss. It's quick to make and more quickly forgotten.

Not so the gourmet hot chocolate or hot cocoa served up by cafes and restaurants.

When made from fine chocolate or cocoa, these steaming drinks are filling, flavorful, and above all, chocolaty. They're so yummy, you're missing a treat if you think of them as a child's drink.

"It's very rich, but not overly sweet," said Heather Little, manager of L.A. Burdick Chocolate in Harvard Square, where lines for hot chocolate often extend out the door on winter weekends. "It's basically liquid chocolate that we make in small batches."

You'll find hot chocolate in a variety of offerings at restaurants and cafes known for

their chocolate, desserts and afternoon tea. Most use Valrhona chocolate, a luxury chocolate made in France. Typically, dark chocolate is used, but milk and white chocolate are lighter and sweeter.

For each cup, L.A. Burdick melts 12 ounces of chocolate, adds a little dark cocoa powder made from beans grown in Granada, and a cup of two-percent milk.

The mixture is steamed until it's very hot, about 165 degrees, and topped with a dollop of foamed milk and a sprinkling of chocolate and spice. Whipped cream also is an option, preferred by those who want to soften dark chocolate's bittersweet flavor, Little said.

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Although the names are used interchangeably, cocoa is different from hot chocolate. It's made from cocoa powder and sugar and doesn't have cocoa butter. But the drink can taste equally rich when made with Valrhona cocoa, sugar infused with vanilla bean, and whole

milk, as it is done at Upstairs on the Square in Cambridge.

When topped with house made marshmallow fluff and accompanied by a piece of chocolate and sugar cookie, it's a dessert in itself.

"It's a simple recipe made from the best ingredients we could find," said beverage manager Augusto Lino. "It's truly decadent."

Sometimes it's hard to choose which hot chocolate to indulge in. *Finale*, a dessert restaurant in Park Plaza, Brookline and Cambridge, takes away the indecision by offering a trio sampler of its bittersweet, hazelnut and white hot chocolate, which also can be served as full-sized servings. And just about any liquor — Kahlua, Bailey's, Amaretto — can be added.

"The regular bittersweet hot chocolate is a classic, but the other chocolates have a definitely different flavor," said *Finale* executive pastry chef Nicole Coady. "I wanted to offer something interesting, rather than just dark and milk chocolate, which are similar."

You can make hot chocolate at home, using your choice of chocolate. But be careful to melt it without burning and to simmer the milk without boiling.

For a different take on cocoa, Best Friends Cocoa, based in Arlington, also sells cinnamon, raspberry and marshmallow varieties. And Phillips Candy House in Dorchester and Braintree last year introduced its brand of cocoa, made from beans grown in Ghana. The quality of the bean makes it unnecessary to process it with alkali and dried milk, company owner, Steve Nagle said.

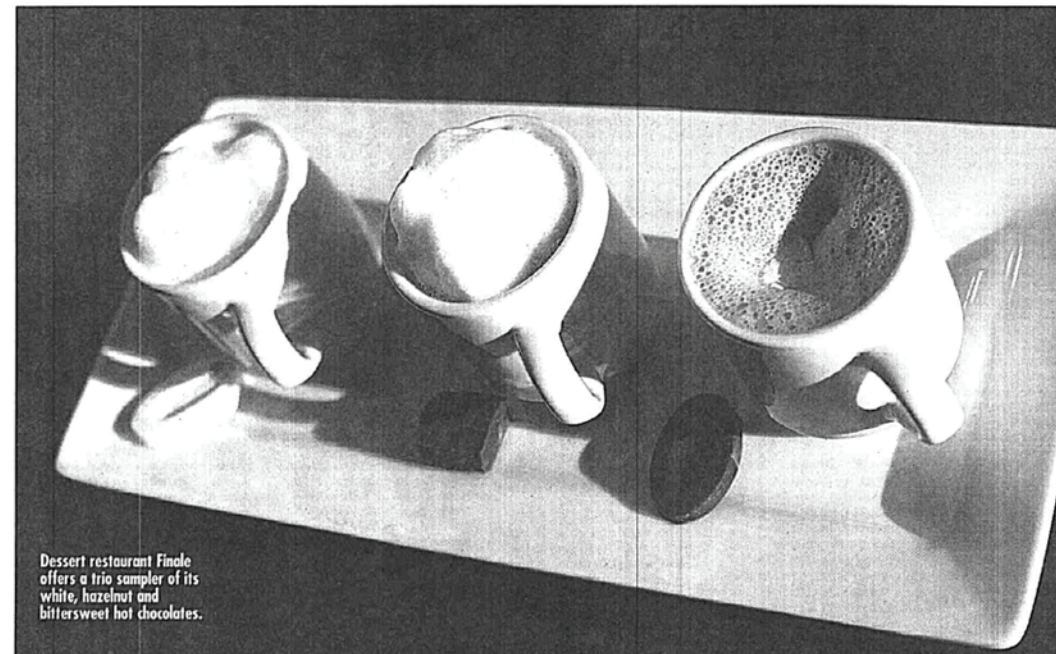
"Ours is just straight cocoa

with a little sugar that you mix into hot milk," Nagle said. "It doesn't need to be processed to make it smoother."

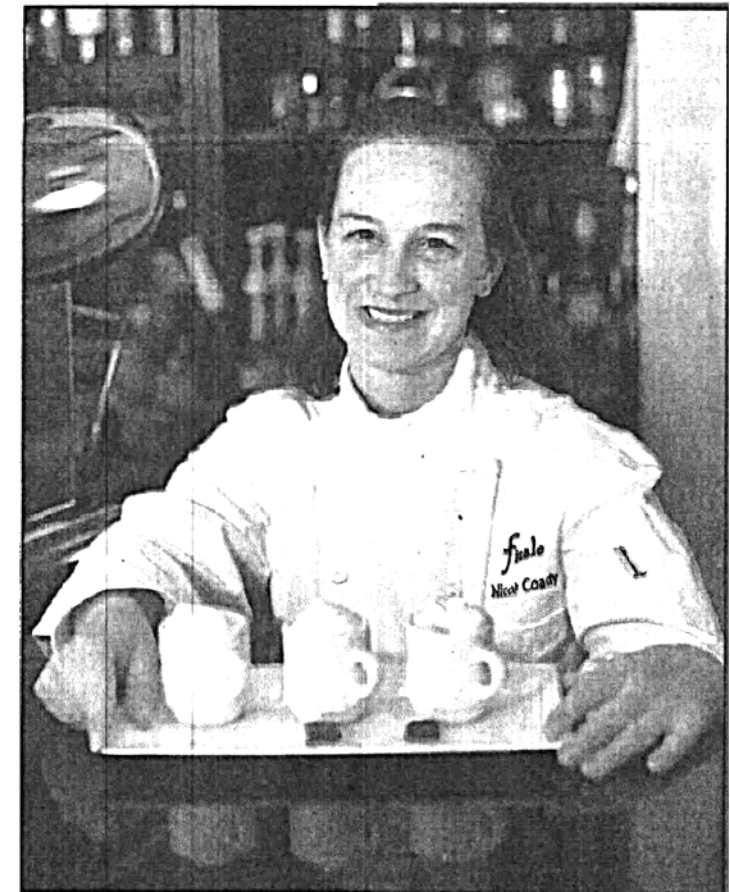
During the holidays, the store offers free cups of cocoa.

"People walk around the store sipping it and then they end up getting a container," Nagle said.

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Dessert restaurant *Finale* offers a trio sampler of its white, hazelnut and bittersweet hot chocolates.



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Nicole Coady, executive pastry chef at *Finale* in Boston, presents *Finale*'s signature hot chocolates: *Ivoire Chocolate* (white chocolate with a hint of orange); *Noisette Chocolate* (rich hazelnut); and *Equitoriale Chocolate* (traditional bittersweet).