

Sunday October 2, 2011

Chocolate confrontation

WE asked a fine foods connoisseur and several well-travelled foodies – chocoholics all – to randomly sample local and imported chocolates available in supermarkets and chocolate boutiques in Malaysia. The brands were only revealed after each tasting.

At the end of this delicious blind taste test (with fruit and wine to clear the palate between tastings), the chocolate enthusiasts concluded that the local industry has grown in leaps and bounds from what they remembered from earlier years.

“I couldn’t tell (the difference) between local and foreign brands, which says there has been improvement on our side,” said tester Brian Lee, a retired chocolatier who used to manage a chocolate boutique in Kuala Lumpur.

Beryl’s Black Bitter (local) – This received mixed reviews. While some found the blocks lacking in taste and texture, others enjoyed its simplicity and commended the manufacturer for the finishing. “It’s simple but the taste comes in waves, growing stronger towards the end,” said one taster. *RM4.99 for 34g*

Cadbury Bournville Dark Chocolate (local) – We presumed that this is Cadbury Malaysia’s first attempt at dark chocolate, as testers were able to taste the oil in the bar. “This is surprising, given that the brand’s milk chocolate tastes better,” Lee remarked. “More cocoa in the future, hopefully.” *RM5.49 for 70g*

Cadbury Gold (local) – Much like the Italian-made Ferrero Rocher, this is a spherical milk chocolate with a hazel nut in its centre. It has a favourable, localised taste that’s reasonably sweet and satisfying. “I’d give it a four out of five,” Lee said. *RM3.29 per pack of three*

Cadbury Milk Chocolate with Fruits and Nuts (Australian) – This won nods of approval from everyone, especially the women, who found its milky taste and texture easy to enjoy. *RM19.99 for 200g*

Chocolat World Lait & Noir and Emergency Chocolate (local) – The homegrown brand boasts premium truffles, pralines and bars that are to be praised for quality texture and taste. While one of the samplers found the Lait & Noir bar “rather sweet and a little too milky”, he was confident that the Emergency bar was imported from Switzerland since it possessed the “smooth and tastefully milky quality that Swiss chocolates have”. *RM9.90 for 100g Lait & Noir / RM12.50 for 100g Emergency Chocolate*

Dugd’O Milk Chocolate (Belgian) – This chocolate was commended for its smooth, buttery texture and reasonable sweetness. “It lacks aftertaste, however,” says Lee. “It a good example

of a lower grade European chocolate: smooth but rather lacking in character.” *RM12.99 for 100g*

Fidani Milk and Dark Chocolate (local) – A handmade chocolate with couverture and recipes imported from Belgium. While one taster appreciated the buttery, creamy texture, others felt that a stronger aftertaste would have added dimension to it. Everyone was pleasantly surprised to discover that it’s locally produced.

“I find the milk chocolate in this range more favourable compared to the dark,” said Lee, “It’s more flavourful in comparison.”

We must note that these comments were based on Fidani plain chocolate, whereas the brand is known for its customised truffles, often adorned with nuts and other dressing. *RM48.30 for 1kg (110 customised pieces)*

Godiva Milk and Dark Chocolate (Belgian) – As might be expected, the renowned Belgian brand garnered nods of approval for its polish. Having sampled both the milk and dark chocolate, one taster praised the smoothness and rich aroma. “I like the creamy texture. The cocoa in it is clear and tangible,” she said. *RM20 for 40g.*

Lindt Dark Chocolate (Swiss) – Surprisingly, this renowned chocolate garnered mixed reviews. In general, it fared better with the men, as might be expected when it comes to dark chocolate. Although Lee felt that it lacked the melt-in-the-mouth quality he expected from the brand, his friend found the bar enjoyable. “It goes down easily, without that tart, bitter taste in most dark chocolates,” he said. *RM9.38 for 100g*

Theobroma Roasted Honey Cinnamon Almond Milk Chocolate (Australian) – This bar with glazed almonds appears more promising than it tastes. “It needs more body and its sugars refined,” five samplers agreed. *RM23.50 for 100g*

Vochelle Dairy Milk Chocolate (local) – This one elicited surprised laughter at first taste! It has a hint of peppermint (similar to that in Lindt’s After Eight Mints) that gives this otherwise plain milk bar an interesting kick and the impression that it is an imported brand. “This is certainly imported,” Lee declared as he sank his teeth into the bar after sniffing it intently. *RM3.99 for 100g*