

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

WORDS KATHY HUNTER

Before his latest venture, Frenchman Nicolas Bonnaud's culinary background has been high-end to say the least. His 18 years of experience has been spent with some of the best chefs in the world, including French master chef Pierre Gagnaire and our own Peter Gordon. Nico was Head Pastry Chef to a team of 11 at the two Michelin Star restaurant, Sketch, in London.

He was drawn to New Zealand by his love of rugby. He worked at Kauri Cliffs restaurant in Matauri Bay, Northland initially, and it was here he met his English wife Emily. She's an interior designer by trade, and her keen eye has come in handy putting together the simple and beautiful branding for the business. The recently married pair are now living in Snell's Beach and working out of a brand-new commercial kitchen they've built at home.

Honest Chocolat has only been going three months but they've already garnered some fervent fans. Their main point of difference is that their bonbons are filled with water ganache. No cream, no butter. And yes, this makes them vegan. "That's not why we went with water ganache though," says Emily. "It's a nice added extra, but it's really because of the taste."

Nico agrees. "The technique gives a much cleaner flavour – it has a clarity that really allows us to showcase the flavour combinations that we're constantly inventing." With fillings like lychee and rosewater, blood orange and black cardamom, toasted fennel seed, and raspberry and ginger, we can see why they want the flavours to come through.

The chocolate they use is organic, single-origin and fairtrade – 70% cacao – from the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The growers use sustainable techniques and plant a tree for every bag of raw cacao sold. This makes Emily and Nico happy.

Sustainability is also one of the reasons they've teamed up with Brick Bay's Glass House Kitchen. Nico is currently using oranges and macadamias from their orchard, and he's also showcasing Brick Bay's Martello Rock red wine in a water ganache bonbon. "You may have tried wines in truffles before and not really have been able to taste the wine – but with water ganache the flavour is not masked by cream or butter."

They are looking for more chocolate collaborators, so if you have some exceptional produce you'd like this talented team to work with, get in touch.

And where can you buy Honest Chocolat? There's a limited range at Brick Bay, but for now online sales are the way to go: it's quick and easy.



‘ FLAVOUR COMBINATIONS OF ... LYCHEE AND ROSEWATER, BLOOD ORANGE AND BLACK CARDAMOM, TOASTED FENNEL SEED, AND RASPBERRY AND GINGER ... ’



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