



Food & Justice

Fair-Trade Chocolate Tastes Even Sweeter

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I don't think of myself as having much of a sweet tooth, although I'm probably lying to myself since I always go weak for good chocolate. I lean toward dark and am happy to try any exotic flavor combination such as Equal Exchange's [lemon ginger with black pepper](http://shop.equalexchange.coop/chocolate/chocolate-bars/organic-chocolate-bar-dark-lemon-ginger-black-pepper.html) (<http://shop.equalexchange.coop/chocolate/chocolate-bars/organic-chocolate-bar-dark-lemon-ginger-black-pepper.html>). What makes enjoying chocolate from Equal Exchange and similar makers a little sweeter is knowing that this chocolate is certified fair trade.

Why does that matter? As a Jew and someone who is social justice minded (not mutually exclusive), it's important to me to know that the farmers who work to produce the delectable cocoa beans are treated fairly. I care about just and safe labor practices for the workers, and I also appreciate knowing that companies are taking care of the communities and the land where the beans are farmed.

As Guittard Chocolate's [sustainability statement](https://www.guittard.com/bean-to-bar) (<https://www.guittard.com/bean-to-bar>) says, "We are working to build relationships throughout our supply chain that will create and maintain thriving cocoa growing communities, from collaborating with farmers on their post-harvest techniques to developing programs focused on education, increasing income to farming families,

emphasizing women's empowerment, increasing quality and continuing to deliver premium prices to our farmers." As a consumer, this kind of peace of mind about my chocolate indulgence always makes it taste that much better.

Of course, I am not alone in this conviction. Local chocolatier Rachele Ferneau of [Dear Coco \(http://www.dearcoco.com\)](http://www.dearcoco.com) shared with me, "As both a small business owner and a consumer, I feel it's important to commit to sourcing and consuming cacao according to green, fair and ethical standards." She elaborates, "Everyone benefits: the farmers (via improved livelihoods and access to education, healthcare and clean water), the environment (via sustainability of current and future cacao crops) and humanity at large. For my business, I choose chocolate made from 100-percent sustainably cultivated cocoa beans sourced fairly and directly from cooperatives in West Africa."

Dear Coco truffles, like Equal Exchange chocolate and many others, are also kosher. According to Ferneau, "As Jews we are obligated in ethical as well as ritual *mitzvot*; fair-trade practices are a way of behaving justly and kindly and help set an example for the rest of the world."

It's interesting to note that it's often easier to find fair-trade chocolate bars rather than truffles since the latter often include additional ingredients which may not be fair-trade certified (even if the cocoa beans themselves are certified)—in this regard, fair-trade and *kashrut* certification also have something in common.

The good news for all us social justice chocolate lovers is that more and more companies are taking note and developing sustainable practices. These include big names you likely recognize, such as [Godiva \(http://www.godiva.com/sustainable-practices/sustainable-practices.html\)](http://www.godiva.com/sustainable-practices/sustainable-practices.html), which has committed to sustainable sourcing of 100 percent of their cocoa supply by 2020.

I think if I had it all do over again, I would go back to grad school and write a thesis about sustainable practices in chocolate production—there's so much to learn! For example, I learned that the best way to ensure your chocolate is as good for the planet as it is for you (thanks, antioxidants!) is to look for labels that specifically say Fair Trade or Rainforest Alliance Certified.

You can also look for smaller, independent chocolate makers such as Dear Coco typically found in higher end and specialty stores that incorporate fair trade or direct trade (that is, traveling and getting the beans themselves), promoting fair labor practices. If you're buying online, be mindful of the temperature outside. Many retailers only ship when it's 75 degrees or below, while others charge an extra fee for shipping in warmer weather.

Chanukah is the festival of lights. This year, consider also making it a festival of delights with fair-trade chocolate. It's as easy as getting your gelt (<http://shop.divinechocolateusa.com/70-Dark-Chocolate-Coins/p/DIV-001859&c=DivineChocolate@Christmas>) from Divine Chocolate, locally headquartered here in southeast DC. You can find the gelt online or at local shops such as Glen's Garden Market. That's pretty darn sweet!

Top photo courtesy of Creative Commons

Where can I find kosher fair-trade chocolate?

Online (and keep an eye out for these brands in stores, too!)

[Askinosie \(https://askinosie.com/\)](https://askinosie.com/)

[Chocolove \(https://www.chocolove.com/\)](https://www.chocolove.com/)

[Dagoba \(http://www.dagobachocolate.com/\)](http://www.dagobachocolate.com/)

[Dear Coco \(http://www.dearcoco.com/\)](http://www.dearcoco.com/)

[Divine Chocolate \(http://www.divinechocolate.com/us/\)](http://www.divinechocolate.com/us/)

[Equal Exchange \(http://equalexchange.coop/products/chocolate\)](http://equalexchange.coop/products/chocolate)

[Guittard \(https://www.guittard.com/\)](https://www.guittard.com/)

DC

[Chocolate Chocolate \(http://www.chocolatedc.com/index.html\)](http://www.chocolatedc.com/index.html) – Farragut North

[The Chocolate House \(https://www.thechocolatehousedc.com/\)](https://www.thechocolatehousedc.com/) (formerly Cocova/Biagio) – Dupont

[Dean & Deluca \(http://www.deandeluca.com/\)](http://www.deandeluca.com/) – Georgetown

[Glen's Garden Market \(http://glensgardenmarket.com/\)](http://glensgardenmarket.com/) – Dupont

Maryland

[Lilit Café \(http://www.lilitcafe.com/\)](http://www.lilitcafe.com/) – Bethesda

[Max Brenner Chocolate Bar \(http://maxbrenner.com/locations/usa/restaurant-bethesda/\)](http://maxbrenner.com/locations/usa/restaurant-bethesda/) – Bethesda

[The Bottle Shop \(http://www.mybottleshop.net/#!sweet-things/cd7r\)](http://www.mybottleshop.net/#!sweet-things/cd7r) – Rockville

[The Candy Man \(http://thecandymanmd.com/en/\)](http://thecandymanmd.com/en/) – Silver Spring

[Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op \(http://tpss.coop/\)](http://tpss.coop/) – Takoma Park

Virginia

[The Sugar Cube \(http://www.sugarcubesweets.com/\)](http://www.sugarcubesweets.com/) – Alexandria (King Street)

Multiple Locations

[Whole Foods \(http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/site_search/fair_trade_chocolate\)](http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/site_search/fair_trade_chocolate) – Locations throughout DC, MD & VA

[World Market \(http://www.worldmarket.com/search.do?query=fair+trade+chocolate\)](http://www.worldmarket.com/search.do?query=fair+trade+chocolate) - MD & VA locations

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Dear Coco Chocolate

Great write up and thanks for the sweet mention!

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