

Laura Slack studied biological anthropology before turning her attention to the (dark) chocolate arts. It's no wonder she chose this chocolate skull to enshrine her black garlic-infused caramel.

WHEN CHOCOLATE MEETS GARLIC

WORDS BY ALEXANDRA SIENKIEWICZ


When a man showed up at Laura Slack's door with a big bag of black garlic, she embraced his challenge to use the garlic in chocolate. The very thought of the chocolate and garlic together immediately triggers an unwelcome pungent and sharp flavour memory that in no way could work with melt-in-your-mouth sweet and smooth chocolate. Or could it?

Black garlic that is slowly roasted for days develops a "much sweeter and milder flavour and can be paired nicely in a dessert," Slack says. She experimented with several ideas bringing the two together, and after a lot of trial and error, she found the perfect combination — black garlic-infused caramel in a dark chocolate shell.

And leave it to the biological anthropologist-turned-artisan chocolatier and pastry chef to use a skull for the truffle's shape. "I had a natural interest in skulls from the start," she says, adding that the shape originated with truffles sold at Halloween and for the Day of the Dead, filled with dulce de leche. But requests for the skull-shaped chocolates kept pouring in — at Christmas, then Valentine's Day, even outselling the traditional heart. So it was a natural fit to use the same mold for the black garlic truffle, which she named Lestat, in honour of the garlic-immune vampire created by Anne Rice.

Most customers are skeptical when it comes to trying the garlicky sweet indulgence at first, but then they're pleasantly surprised.

"It comes across as distinctly garlic, but in a nuanced way, with a delicate and sweet flavour," she says. She infuses the cream with the black garlic before simmering it slowly until it caramelizes. She then pipes it into chocolate shells before topping it with more chocolate.

As for that man who showed up on her door with the bag of black garlic? He's still enlisting fascinating ways to use garlic, as the founder of the Toronto Garlic Festival, now in its eighth year. Peter McClusky, author of *Ontario Garlic: The Story from Farm to Festival*, has curated a selection of chefs and food artisans from across the Greater Toronto Area who will be serving up everything from garlic-butter tarts to seared seal with roasted garlic purée this September at Artscape Wychwood Barns. And of course, there will be garlic bulbs as far as the eye can see. 

Laura Slack Chocolate Artist
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