

[N.Y. / Region](#)

\$112 a Pound for Chocolate? (Maybe Just Nibble.)

[Neighborhood Joint](#)

By NANCY RUHLING JAN. 31, 2018



Teuscher, which was founded in 1932 in the Swiss Alps, has been a Rockefeller Center sweet spot for 39 years. The Fifth Avenue shop is the U.S. flagship. Credit Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times

The windows at Teuscher Chocolatier are a colorful, caloric confection that changes to herald each holiday. This time of year, they're decorated with lipstick-red heart-shaped Valentine's Day boxes.

Lynne-Marie Friedrichs, a vacationer from San Diego, couldn't resist their charms. She bought herself a milk chocolate lactose-free bar and then returned the next day with her aunt, uncle and daughter in tow.

“I haven’t had milk chocolate for years,” she said, as she bought a box of Champagne truffles for her son, who could not come on the trip. “It was the most fabulous chocolate I ever ate.”

Teuscher, which was founded in 1932 in the Swiss Alps, has been a Rockefeller Center sweet spot for 39 years. The Fifth Avenue shop is the U.S. flagship. (There’s also a bite-size shop at 61st and Madison Avenue.)

Ilana Hyman, a visual perceptual therapist who lives on the Upper West Side, stopped by, as she does every day on her way to the gym, to get a couple of Teuscher’s signature Champagne truffles. She discovered Teuscher in 1980, a year after it opened.

“I do high-impact aerobics,” she said, “and they give me extra energy.”

The store’s manager, Angela Mascarenas, who knows Ms. Hyman by name, gave her a hug and a complimentary truffle. “You’ve eaten the same flavor for 38 years,” she said. “Why don’t you try another?”



The windows at Teuscher Chocolatier are a colorful, caloric confection that changes to herald each holiday. This time of year, they’re decorated with lipstick-red heart-shaped Valentine’s Day boxes. Credit Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times

Ms. Hyman, somewhat unadventurously, chose the dark chocolate version of her usual milk chocolate Champagne truffle. She pronounced it perfect.

A complimentary truffle is nothing to sniff at. The chocolates at Teuscher, which arrive every Monday from Zurich, Switzerland, are not cheap: they sell for \$112 per pound or around \$3.36 per piece. Fancy fantasy boxes, which include 3D elephants blowing flowers out of their trunks and wide-winged ladybugs, are extra.

The Champagne truffles, which are sold singly or set, like precious gems, in lime green boxes tied with gold ribbon, were introduced in 1947. They were the creation of Dolf Teuscher, the founder.

“My father got the idea during a heat wave, which is a confectioner’s nightmare,” said Dolf Teuscher Jr., who was visiting the store from his home in Zurich. “He saw two Champagne buckets sitting on the top of a glass cabinet. That night, he dreamed of the buckets and saw himself making Champagne truffles and selling them like crazy. We’ve never changed the recipe.”

Mr. Teuscher recently added rose and lavender truffles to the collection that includes salted caramel, pistachio, orange and Grand Marnier flavors.

“The oil inside is natural,” he said. “It’s very expensive — \$15,000 a quart, but you only need a few drops.”



Prakash Sharma arranges truffles. Valentine’s Day, not surprisingly, is Teuscher’s biggest sales day of the year. Credit Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times

Sara Yoffe, a nurse at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, had tasted Teuscher chocolates only a couple of times. She stopped in to buy a 16-piece box of Champagne truffles for her grandmother's 85th birthday.

"She and my grandfather, who has passed, went to Switzerland every year for 40 years," Ms. Yoffe said. "She loves them — she'll eat one after dinner each night with her espresso."

Valentine's Day, not surprisingly, is Teuscher's biggest sales day of the year, and even the phone lines are busy. Tanya Aliyeva, an executive assistant for an executive coaching company, called in early to place her order.

"From Day 1, I was in love," she said later that day. "I've been traveling around the world and I've never had anything more delicious. Every year, my boss buys me the best, biggest box for Valentine's Day."

For most of the rest of the year, Ms. Aliyeva, who lives in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, takes care of her own chocolate cravings, although she said it takes tremendous willpower to place an order only every other month.

Ms. Hyman, however, prefers instant gratification.

"Sometimes, I eat the truffles in the shop," she said. "But I try to make them last until I get across the street."

This time, they were gone before she was out the door.

A version of this article appears in print on February 4, 2018, on Page MB3 of the New York edition with the headline: Treasure Trove of Truffles.