

UK&I Edition

ARTISAN TOP CHOCOLATE TRENDS

2026 & Beyond



WGSN

CALLEBAUT®

MASTERS OF TASTE

WGSN

The insights in this guide are informed by Barry Callebaut's *Future of Taste* research, developed in partnership with WGSN — one of the world's leading consumer trend forecasting agencies — drawing on global consumer insights, expert perspectives and cultural trend analysis, including:

24,000 CONSUMERS SURVEYED ACROSS **24** MARKETS

OVER **600** CONSUMER DIARY RESPONSES

INTERVIEWS WITH **20** LEADING CHEFS AND INDUSTRY EXPERTS

MONTHLY ANALYSIS OF OVER **100,000** SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

These insights help identify long-term consumer shifts rather than short-term trends, providing chefs with actionable inspiration for innovation.

UK&IE CHOCOLATE TRENDS SHAPING ARTISAN CREATIONS IN 2026

Chocolate is increasingly polarised across the United Kingdom and Ireland. While price sensitivity remains important for consumers, there is also a growing desire for **premium experiences, craftsmanship and emotional connection**.

For artisan chocolatiers, pastry chefs and dessert professionals, this presents a unique opportunity. By combining creativity with chocolate expertise, chefs can create **memorable chocolate experiences that resonate with evolving consumer expectations**.

The UK & Ireland have a high proportion of curious, **trend-aware consumers** who enjoy discovering new flavours and experiences.

Consumers across generations increasingly **seek food that creates connection**, whether through shared desserts, social occasions or memorable dining experiences.

For chefs, chocolate provides a powerful medium to create these moments — from **interactive desserts and tasting experiences to signature patisserie creations**.



PEOPLE

Price remains a key consideration for consumers, particularly in today's economic environment. At the same time, there is a growing willingness to trade up for products and experiences that deliver **quality, craftsmanship and emotional value**.

This dynamic is creating a more polarised market, where everyday affordability and premium indulgence increasingly coexist.

For artisan chefs, this presents an opportunity to offer **accessible moments of indulgence**, while also creating higher-value experiences that justify premium positioning.



PRICE



Consumers increasingly expect the products they choose to reflect their **values**, including transparency, ingredient quality and responsible sourcing.

In chocolate, this is reflected in growing interest in **where ingredients come from, how they are produced, and the story behind them.**

For artisan chefs, this creates an opportunity to combine **craftsmanship with credibility**, using quality ingredients and clear storytelling to build trust and elevate the perceived value of their creations.

PURPOSE



OPPORTUNITY FOR ARTISANS

In a market shaped by **price awareness, desire for connection and growing interest in purpose**, chocolate craftsmanship has the power to transform simple ingredients into memorable experiences.

By embracing these shifts, artisan chefs can **elevate chocolate creations, surprise customers and create new opportunities for premiumisation** across menus and retail offerings.

TOP 5

GOURMET TRENDS

FOR 2026



1. CELEBRATING MINI-MOMENTS

"Minorstones" — small, everyday achievements worth celebrating.



2. CHOCOLATE NOSTALGIA

Reinterpreting childhood flavours for modern indulgence.



3. SELF-CARE TREATS

Indulgence as part of wellness rather than something to limit.



4. SENSORIAL CHOCOLATE

Unexpected textures and flavour combinations.



5. EVERYDAY LUXURY

Premium chocolate experiences becoming daily indulgences.



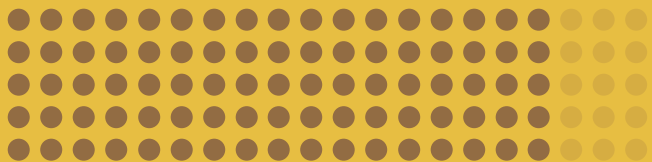
1. CELEBRATING MINI-MOMENTS

CONSUMER INSIGHT

Consumers are increasingly celebrating **everyday achievements and personal milestones**, rather than waiting for major occasions.

These "small moments" are driving demand for **premium, shareable treats** that elevate everyday indulgence.

1. CELEBRATING MINI-MOMENTS



85%

of UK consumers enjoy celebrating non-traditional milestones with friends and family.

Callebaut x WGSN Global Consumer Survey (UK), 2025



42%

would find sweet treats that create social experiences highly relevant.

Callebaut x WGSN Global Consumer Survey (UK), 2025

CHEF INSIGHT

"There are some beautiful moments when we can share food with somebody. We want to bring something exceptional to share with someone close."

Kamil Szulc, Chef at Callebaut Chocolate Academy (Poland)

CONSUMER INSIGHT

"Celebrating smaller events instead of waiting for major festivals has added a festive feel to daily life.."

Consumer insight, Future of Taste research

1. CELEBRATING MINI-MOMENTS

EXAMPLE RECIPE

AFTERNOON TEA SELECTION

A chocolate afternoon tea brings together a variety of small treats designed for sharing. It transforms chocolate into a **celebratory experience for small, everyday moments.**

[Recipe link](#)

RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS

Origin chocolate



Silky Ghana
refined milk
chocolate for
premium
pieces

Ruby chocolate



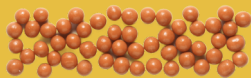
Zestina RB2
naturally pink
milk chocolate,
vibrant and
fruity

Cocoa powder



Rouge Ultime
a mahogany
hue and
complex, smoky
character

Decoration



**Caramel
Crispearls™**
decadent
texture for
toppings



1. CELEBRATING MINI-MOMENTS

INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISANS



Celebration formats

- mini cakes
- chocolate assortments
- sharing platters designed for small occasions

Personalised treats

- custom message chocolates
- personalised celebration cakes
- themed treats e.g. "Well Done!"

Multi-format experiences

- chocolate afternoon tea
- desert tasting flights
- plated desert and take-home pairings

At-home celebration kits

- hot chocolate kits
- DIY dessert kits
- chocolate tasting sets



2. CHOCOLATE NOSTALGIA

CONSUMER INSIGHT

In uncertain times, consumers increasingly turn to **comforting flavours and nostalgic treats**.

Classic desserts and childhood favourites are being rediscovered, but with a modern twist — elevated through premium ingredients and refined craftsmanship.

This trend reflects a desire for **familiar flavours presented in new and exciting ways**.

2. CHOCOLATE NOSTALGIA



85%

of consumers think that chocolate that transports them back to a memory is relevant to them.

Callebaut x WGSN
Global Consumer Survey (UK), 2025



51%

of consumers find sweet treats that remind them of their childhood highly relevant.

Callebaut x WGSN Global Consumer Survey (UK), 2025

CHEF INSIGHT

"Nostalgia is not going away. Chocolate chip cookies, brownies — those comfort foods still perform really well."

Lauren V Haas, Chef

CONSUMER INSIGHT

"I prefer foods that remind me of what my mother made. They bring me comfort and a feeling of home."

Gen Z Consumer

2. CHOCOLATE NOSTALGIA

INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISANS



Elevated childhood classics

- school dinner puddings
- re-invented retro
- nostalgic cake flavours

Kid-ult indulgence

- playful chocolate shapes
- interactive desserts
- humorous formats

Global comfort flavours

- horchata chocolate
- French-style dairy creams
- black sesame pastries

Grandma-era baking

- brown butter chocolate desserts
- rustic cakes
- traditional pastries with premium chocolate

2. CHOCOLATE NOSTALGIA

EXAMPLE RECIPE

CHOCOLATE MADEIRA CAKE

Madeira cake is a classic British bake associated with **comfort and tradition**. Adding chocolate elevates this nostalgic favourite while preserving its familiar character. [Recipe link](#) (steps 5 and 6)

RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS

Origin chocolate



Rustic Fleur

De Cao

deep cocoa
complexity – spice,
floral and fruit

Dark chocolate



Silky 811

reliable
flavour for
cakes and
glazes

Cocoa powder



Extra Brute

legendary
reliability, rich
colour and
intense flavour

Decoration



Dark Chocolate

Spring
Shavings
a classic
finisher





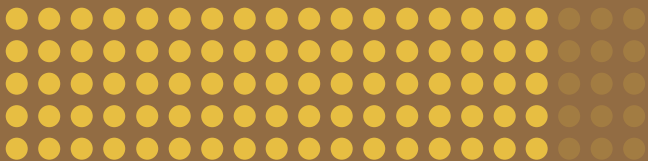
3. SELF-CARE TREATS

CONSUMER INSIGHT

Consumers are increasingly viewing indulgence as part of **self-care and emotional wellbeing**.

Rather than restricting treats, they are seeking chocolate moments that feel intentional, rewarding and aligned with their lifestyle.

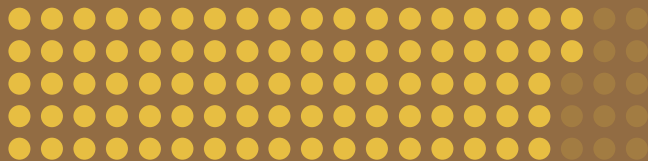
3. SELF-CARE TREATS



85%

of consumers consider sweet treats part of their self-care routine.

Callebaut x WGSN Global Consumer Survey (UK), 2025



87%

consumers find chocolate confectionery that includes healthy, beneficial ingredients relevant to them.

Callebaut x WGSN Global Consumer Survey (UK), 2025

CHEF INSIGHT

"Beyond indulgence, consumers want treats that align with self-care and mindful indulgence."

Kamil Szulc, Chef

CONSUMER INSIGHT

"Indulgence is also self-care. It's part of how I regulate myself... I don't feel guilty about eating sweets anymore."

Gen Z Consumer

INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISANS



Everyday indulgence formats

- single-serve desserts
- individually portioned treats
- takeaway indulgence options

Mindful ingredient pairings

- chocolate with fruit, nuts or spices
- dark chocolate-led desserts
- reduced sweetness profiles

Ritual-led experiences

- dessert and drink pairings
- chocolate moments designed for relaxation
- evening or "wind-down" treats

Functional ingredients

- turmeric chocolate
- chilli chocolate
- nut butter fillings

3. SELF-CARE TREATS

EXAMPLE RECIPE

CHOCOLATE MOUSSE, ALMOND SPONGE & RASPBERRY

Chocolate, nuts and fruit combine to create a dessert that feels **balanced yet indulgent**, offering a moment of enjoyment that aligns with self-care and mindful indulgence. [Recipe link](#)

RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS

Origin chocolate



**Zestina
Madagascar**
bright cocoa
notes that pair
well with fruit

Cocoa powder



Légère 1%
ultra-lean with
nutty and
woody
undertones

Mousse powder



**Milk Chocolate
Mousse Powder**
consistent and
efficient mousse
preparation

Cocoa ingredients



Cocoa Nibs
Natural cacao
crunch and
flavour for
texturising





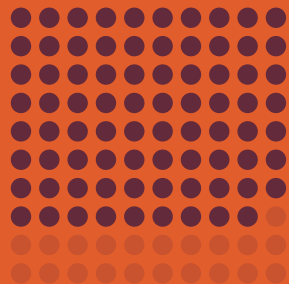
4. SENSORIAL CHOCOLATE

CONSUMER INSIGHT

Consumers are increasingly drawn to **multi-sensory food experiences** that combine flavour, texture and visual creativity.

Unexpected combinations — such as crunchy, creamy and popping textures — create memorable moments that stimulate curiosity and delight.

4. SENSORIAL CHOCOLATE



79%

of consumers find chocolate confectionery that has a surprising or unexpected texture relevant to them.

Callebaut x WGSN Global Consumer Survey (UK), 2025



2 in 5

consumers also find chocolates that blend sweet and savoury flavours very relevant to them.

Callebaut x WGSN Global Consumer Survey (UK), 2025

CHEF INSIGHT

"People are a lot more experimental and willing to accept new things. We can express creativity more with chocolates now."

Lawrence Cheong, Chef

CONSUMER INSIGHT

"Things are getting more adventurous with the different flavours. Everything's getting bigger and more dramatic. People need something extra."

Callebaut x WGSN Global Consumer Study, 2025

4. SENSORIAL CHOCOLATE

INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISANS



Multi-texture desserts

- crunchy praline layers
- mousse and crumble textures
- crispy inclusions

Unexpected flavour pairings

- chocolate with savoury notes
- umami chocolate pairings
- herbal chocolate combinations

Viral-worthy creations

- dramatic desserts
- theatrical chocolate experience
- visually striking patisserie

Immersive tasting experiences

- chocolate tasting menus
- sensory chocolate flights
- experiential dessert presentations

4. SENSORIAL CHOCOLATE

EXAMPLE RECIPE

CHOCOLATE, PRALINE & PEAR PLATED DESSERT

Smooth chocolate, crunchy praline and fresh pear create **contrasting textures and flavours**, delivering a multi-sensory dessert experience. [Recipe link](#)

RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS

Origin chocolate



Zestina Tanzania
expressive flavour:
cocoa, then sweet-
bitter notes, fruit
and a mellow finish

White chocolate



Silky Velvet
our silkiest,
creamiest
white
chocolate

Cocoa Powder



Noir Intense
striking black
colour, bold taste
with refined
complexity

Decorations



**Dark Chocolate
Taco Shells**
designed for
spectacular
fillings





5. EVERYDAY LUXURY

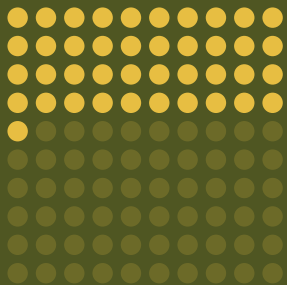
CONSUMER INSIGHT

Premium chocolate is increasingly seen as an **accessible luxury**.

Rather than reserving indulgence for special occasions, consumers are treating themselves to small moments of luxury more frequently.

This shift allows premium chocolate to become part of everyday enjoyment.

5. EVERYDAY LUXURY



41%

of consumers find trying limited-edition chocolate flavours or collaborations from well-known brands relevant to them, rising to over half of trend-forward Early Adopters.

Callebaut x WGSN Global Consumer Survey (UK), 2025



53%

of consumers find premium, high-quality ingredients to be **very** relevant.

Callebaut x WGSN
Global Consumer Survey (UK), 2025

CHEF INSIGHT

"Showing the process of food being created gives people comfort and reassurance that the product is artisanal."

Tal Spiegel, Chef

CONSUMER INSIGHT

"I value quality rather than quantity. If I eat something, I want it to be good quality."

Gen X Consumer

INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISANS



Elevated classics

- premium chocolate tartlets
- refined éclairs
- luxury brownies

Single-origin storytelling

- origin-specific chocolate desserts
- terroir-driven flavour stories
- cocoa provenance experiences

Premium ingredients

- nuts
- spices
- rare flavour pairings

Signature creations

- house signature bonbons
- chef-signature desserts
- premium chocolate gift boxes

5. EVERYDAY LUXURY

EXAMPLE RECIPE

INTENSE CHOCOLATE TART

A chocolate tart highlights the purity of premium chocolate, creating a **simple yet refined indulgence**. [Recipe link](#)

RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS

Origin chocolate



Rustic Philippines
sophisticated
Filipino cocoa with
rummy aroma and
sweet red fruits

Dark chocolate



Silky 70-30-38
rich, balanced,
and perfect
for boosting
flavour

Cocoa Powder



Décor Cacao
hydrophobic, for
immaculate and
lasting
presentations

Decorations



**Dark X-large
pencils**
Add drama and
height to a
showstopper



4. SENSORIAL CHOCOLATE

MARKET EXAMPLES

1. CELEBRATING MINI-MOMENTS

PETAL & COCOA
(confectionery)
UK | 2025

Inspired by the flavours of the Middle East, Petal and Cocoa's Dubai Chocolate Hearts Bar is designed for sharing, with playful, snappable heart segments ideal for gifting or enjoying treat moments together.

2. CHOCOLATE NOSTALGIA

LITTLE MERCIES
(beverages)
UK | 2024

Tapping into the trend of transforming childhood treats into adult fun, Little Mercies' Snickers Old-Fashioned is made with bourbon, distilled peanut, salted chocolate and cacao nibs.

3. SELF-CARE TREATS

MY QUIET KITCHEN
(bakery & pastry)
US | 2024

Lori Rasmussen's brownies are a rich and dense chocolate treat with healthy vegan alternatives, with buckwheat flour, tahini and coffee to create a deep layered nutty flavour.

4. SENSORIAL CHOCOLATE

QIMA CAFÉ
(desserts)
UK | 2025

Qima Cafe transforms a mousse and sponge cake dessert into a hyper-realistic takeaway coffee cup, topped with an edible lid. A surprising twist on perception.

5. EVERYDAY LUXURY

PANADERA
(bakery & pastry)
UK | 2024

Pandy Candy's 'Puffle' encapsulates fluffy, dissolving cotton candy in a chocolate shell with crisp dehydrated strawberry sprinkles, creating a dynamic textural experience.

WE HOPE THIS GUIDE INSPIRES YOUR CREATIONS

Callebaut & WGSN



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