



Vendor Spotlight: Sciascia Confections

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Tom and Loren Sciascia left their graphic design studio to embark on a sweet and savory journey with Sciascia Confections. These self-taught culinary geniuses have won best chocolatiers on both sides of the river four consecutive years. Every single item on their menu is 100% gluten free and packed with flavor. We interviewed Tom Sciascia to learn more about his divine drinking chocolate, chocolate truffles, salted caramels, brownies, and French macarons.

How did this journey begin?

In 1990, my wife Loren and I opened a graphic design studio. With clients ranging from SAP America to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, our work won national accolades for excellence in design. But as often happens, life changes. When the attacks of 9/11 devastated our worlds, we realized we were destined to create art for a different palate. 9/11 made all of us stop and think about life and what this journey is all about. For us, that meant going back to our roots, to our childhood, to our family. Growing up in a very close and loving Italian family, I

was spoiled with the riches of simple and fresh homemade food and its ability to bring such incredible happiness. And Sciascia Confections was born. And so that holiday season, we made pastries and chocolates for our clients. Once we started experimenting more with chocolate, we fell in love with it. And chocolate became our vehicle to spread the love. Demand for our chocolates grew, so we put our graphic design business on hold and ran with chocolate.

How did you become a chocolatier?

I'm self taught. On the weekends, I would read and study and experiment and make tons of confections! I also took classes with visiting master pastry chefs in Canada, Chicago, and NYC. Learning from these chefs from around the world was amazing. They taught me the importance of ingredients and techniques. They were so inspiring, and generous with wanting to share their knowledge. These classes not only confirmed things I had taught myself, but propelled me to new heights.

Where do you find inspiration?

My mom, she was amazing in the kitchen. There was nothing she couldn't do. My very first truffle was from one of my mom's recipes—her coconut cream eggs that she made for Easter. I took those elements and turned them into a truffle. Many of our confections are things I loved as a child and reinvented for Sciascia.

What is the difference between your chocolate and store bought chocolate?

Our chocolate is made in small batches by hand with fewer ingredients that are higher in quality. We like to use 70% dark chocolate and above in almost all of our chocolate applications. The Romeo and Juliet truffle is one of our most popular chocolates and it has just five ingredients—organic raspberries, dark chocolate, cream, butter, and a splash of raspberry liqueur. Every ingredient counts!

Do you cater to special dietary restrictions?

Yes. I'm gluten free, and I feel it's important to embrace that. My body can no longer tolerate gluten, and that changed everything. I want to enjoy my creations. I don't want anyone to be able to tell our confections are gluten free,—that

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was my mission. People ask if we have gluten free items, and when we tell them everything is gluten free they get so excited. Everything is gluten free and awesome. We make dairy free and vegan options as well.

Where do you source your ingredients?

We source local ingredients when we can, including honey and bee pollen. Soon we will be making caramel apples that we source from Manoff Farms in Solebury. They're enormous, and so good, made with Madagascar vanilla bean infused caramel, fresh roasted pecans, and dark chocolate. We source chocolate that is sustainably grown. Chocolate is a lot like coffee, it matters where it's grown—the climate and the soil all contribute to the flavor profile.

What made you branch out from chocolates to other confections?

Truffles were our forte, then natural progression lead to chocolate bars and bark. Loren and I took a trip to Paris, about 10 years ago, and that's when we fell in love with the French macaron. In Paris, macarons were everywhere. When we got back home, we couldn't find them here. We started experimenting like crazy to make them on our own. It took us six months, but 3,000 macarons later we could finally say, "we did it", and "we'll always have Paris!"

I've heard you have the best macarons this side of Paris. Is that true?

I'm humbled by the outpouring of macaron love, so I'll just say this: many people will go to Paris, come back, and say the same thing, 'your macarons are the best we've had.' I truly think our flavors set them apart. Maybe because of my background as a chocolatier, I create fillings that are unique, simple, and flavorful. Our most popular macarons are Birthday Cake, Red Velvet, and Pistachio. Many people say they've been all over the world and are happy to know that they can get macarons right here in New Hope. In fact, one of our customers goes to Paris once a month, but she won't buy macarons when she goes there anymore, because she says "Sciascia's macarons are the best." I love that!

You have samples of "drinking chocolate" available at the market. What is it?

Drinking chocolate also came from our trip to Paris. Angelina's is known for their drinking chocolate—it was so rich and creamy and chocolatey, we were inspired. Our drinking chocolate is our house blend of dark 70% dark chocolate, and it is pure chocolate heaven, there's no sugar or milk powder added. Drinking chocolate is the drink of the gods.

How do you pair your confections with other food or drinks?

Pairing chocolates with other foods is a matter of pulling out flavor nuances of any particular ingredient, and using your taste buds to find the perfect match. Our chocolate pairs well with wine of course, but I think chocolate and beer is incredible too. We've done a tasting flight of chocolate with stouts and ales, and it's quite remarkable. Food for thought: a nice dark stout and our WTF brownie is a match made in chocolate nirvana. So good, it's insane.

What are your holiday offerings?

Around the holidays, we change our flavor profiles, especially for the macarons. We will offer candy cane and eggnog macarons, as well as a newer gingerbread man mac. Peppermint bark will be available too. Packaging changes, we switch from our corporate blue and brown to beautiful reds and golds. There is a heavier concentration on our boxed truffle collections, and we do lots of corporate gifts. Because of our design backgrounds, the sky's the limit for customized graphics on cards or packages. People love that. Whether it's local or global, we've done it all. Graphics come easy, we can take corporate logos or messages and design special cards and use ribbons that will coordinate with their corporate colors.

While Tom and Loren used to be graphic artists, they now use their artistic talent to craft sweet masterpieces. If you haven't tried their handcrafted and small batch confections, now is the perfect time. A box of treats from Sciascia Confections is the ultimate gift for holiday hosts. Contact Tom or Loren to learn more about catering for family gatherings and company parties too!