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The salted caramel sundae at the General Greene



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The pros



The top ten pastry chefs you need to know

1 Robert Truitt, Corton

The undersung Truitt honed his avant approach at Spain's molecular temple El Bulli, and locally at the shuttered Room 4 Dessert. He's known for his experimentation and methodical presentations (he's currently playing with silicone molds to create 3-D landscapes on the plate). However, Truitt keeps the flavors familiar: Raspberries may be blasted with liquid nitrogen, but they still taste like the ripe, humble fruit. 239 West Broadway between Walker and White Sts (212-219-2777, cortonnyc.com)

2 Nicholas Morgenstem, the General Greene

The former Gilt and Gramercy Tavern pastry chef applies his classical roots to all-American standards at his Fort Greene eatery. Quality ingredients are a hallmark: There's fruity Felchlin Swiss chocolate in the chocolate chip cookies, lard buttering up the flaky apple-pie crust, and items like Counter Culture coffee enriching his signature ice creams. 229 DeKalb Ave at Clermont Ave, Fort Greene, Brooklyn (718-222-1510, thegeneral@greene.com)

3 François Payard, FC Chocolate Bar

The godfather of NYC's French pastry scene, Payard helped shape the dessert menus at Le Bernardin and Daniel. He earned a James Beard Award in 1995 for his trouble. Currently Payard is creating his lavish, decadent desserts inside the Mauboussin boutique, but he'll have more room to play when his François Payard Bakery (FPB) opens this September. *Mauboussin boutique, 714 Madison Ave between 63rd and 64th Sts, fourth floor (212-759-1600, payard.com)*

4 Dominique Ansel, Daniel

Ansel spent seven years with the formidable Parisian pastry outfit Fauchon before joining Daniel. His Louvre-worthy pastry portraiture leans on international flavors—particularly Asian ones—and a combination of modern and classic French techniques. (Witness a cloud of orange foam scented with anise and ginger that accompanies a hazelnut-chocolate mousse.) 60 E 65th St between Madison and Park Aves (212-288-0033, danielnyc.com)

5 Karen DeMasco, Locanda Verde

DeMasco specializes in polished, straightforward presentations that combine seasonal American flavors with Italian ingredients and recipes. The seven-year vet of Tom Colicchio's Craft empire and James Beard Award winner raids the savory pantry, using ingredients such as extra-virgin olive oil and white balsamic vinegar to add flavorful, aromatic accents to cakes, ice creams and sauces. 377 Greenwich St between Franklin and North Moore Sts (212-925-3797, locandaverdenyc.com)

1896 | Austrian immigrant Leo Hirshfield sells chewy chocolate treats from his Brooklyn store. In 1908, he dubs them Tootsie Rolls and begins to manufacture the penny candies in Manhattan.



1903 | *The New York Times* writes that "New York is pre-eminently the candy city of the world. It has more establishments engaged in its manufacture and more stores handling it than any other city on earth."