

Press Release

Embargoed until Monday 6th October



Sales of luxury chocolate are breaking all records at Selfridges as people indulge in the ultimate feel good food

Is it the darker evenings? Is it the chill of the north wind? Maybe it's the diet of bad news we are being force-fed daily. Whatever it is, sales of luxury chocolate are breaking all records across Selfridges' stores.

Demand for luxury chocolate hit new heights at Selfridges in September with the retailer seeing sales in the premium chocolate category rise by 20 per cent in the last four weeks.

As the economy tightens and the weather gets colder, customers are looking for more affordable luxury treats for themselves and gifts to cheer up friends and family.

Sales of Selfridges' artisan-produced pure chocolate with at least 70 per cent cocoa solids have increased by 30 per cent with luxury brands Amedei, Luento Santoro and Alice being the bars of choice to crack into.

Meanwhile, gourmet boxes of chocolates and luxury chocolate gifting such as pralines and truffles have increased by 35 per cent with Melt, Artisan Du Chocolat and Sir Hans Sloane being the most popular lines.

Selfridges sells 50,000 chocolate products each week.

For those demanding edible treats and to celebrate National Chocolate Week (from 13th to 19th October) today - Monday 6th October – a new chocolate treat called the ‘Credit Crunch’ has hit the Selfridges’ shelves.

Exclusive to Selfridges the ‘Credit Crunch’ has been created through collaboration between restaurateur and food writer Laura Santin and The Chocolate Society.

‘Credit Crunch’ is a more-ish marriage of the very best velvet-rich Valrhona chocolate, thickly coated over hokey pokey honeycomb pieces. It is available covered either in dark or milk Valrhona chocolate (£3.99 for a 150g bag).

This delicious chocolate treat is hand made at The Chocolate Society’s west London kitchens by its team of expert chocolatiers.

In the last month Selfridges has launched more luxury chocolate brands to help satisfy the growing customer demand for quality chocolate.

Chokolit, artisan chocolate made by teenage entrepreneur Louis Barnett, has sold well since it launched in Selfridges at the end of September. Sculptural pieces such as edible chocolate boxes and champagne flutes have been popular.

To enlarge its credentials as a destination for chocolate connoisseurs Selfridges is set to open the UK’s first ever Artisan Du Chocolat store-in-store and Melt concession – the celebrities chocolate choice – in its Oxford Street store.

Selfridges’ Director of Food and Restaurants Ewan Venters says: “Although people might be looking to spend a little less at the moment, they still want to treat themselves to the best in terms of quality and luxury.

“Quality chocolate is the ultimate solution, being relatively inexpensive, instantly satisfying and really helps lift your mood. We expect our new ‘Credit Crunch’ chocolate to be a big seller especially on the lead up to Halloween and Christmas.”

The Chocolate Society proprietor and food writer Kevin Gould adds: “The ‘Credit Crunch’ treat we have created exclusively for Selfridges is good news for chocolate lovers and doom-sayers alike.

“Whether as a sensitive gift or a secret indulgence, ‘Credit Crunch’ brings comfort and joy to the season, whatever the weather.”

A recent survey by consumer research company Mintel shows the value of chocolate sales between 2005 and 2007 rose by 10 percent in the UK, up sharply from growth of only 1 per cent between 2003 and 2005.

Luxury chocolate sales were up 46 percent over the two-year period, reaching £140 million.

Mintel also revealed a further 5 per cent growth was expected this year, bringing the value of the British chocolate market to £2.23 billion by the end of 2008.

It is not just chocolate treats that are on the rise at Selfridges. Shoppers' appetites for other affordable luxuries are also strong.

In the food halls during September sales of smoked salmon sales were 30 per cent up on the same month last while sales of bakery treats rose by 60 per cent. In the bakery Christmas puddings started to sell earlier than last year demonstrating consumers are getting excited about seasonal festivities.

Elsewhere Selfridges' home department has seen sales of home fragrance increase as people want to make their homes cosier as the cold sets in. Candle sales are 15 per cent ahead of the same time last year.

Selfridges home accessories buying manager Geraldine James says: "Within Home Fragrance the most impressive growth areas is room diffusers, which are wooden sticks in oils. With a diffuser you get more lasting fragrance for your money as they work for 6 months whereas the average candle has between 40 to 60 hours of burning."

Ends

For further information or high resolution images please contact Hayley Booth at ZPR on 0207 896 3206 or email hayley@z-pr.com

OR

Selfridges Food and Home PR Manager Nancy Wainscoat on 020 7318 3638 or email nancy.wainscoat@selfridges.co.uk

For samples contact Paul Wells at Selfridges on 020 7 318 3056, email paul.wells@selfridges.co.uk

Notes to Editors

The Chocolate Society's credit crunch bag designed exclusively by Laura Santini will be available exclusively from Selfridges' four food halls (London, Manchester Trafford Centre, Manchester Exchange Square and Birmingham) priced **£3.99** (150 g bag).

Selfridges Stockist Number 0800 123 400 or www.selfridges.com

[About Laura Santin](#)

- Laura Santin, is a restaurateur (her Santini restaurants are in London, Edinburgh and Milan) and also an accomplished cook, food writer and columnist, writing notably on kitchen conundrums as Waitrose Food Illustrated's 'Mrs Santini'.

About Selfridges

- The business was founded by American entrepreneur Gordon Selfridge in 1909 and run by him until he retired in 1940 and took on the role of President. Gordon Selfridge died in 1947 and four years later Lewis's Investment Trust bought a controlling interest in Selfridges.

- In 1965 Charles Clore's British Shoe Corporation (subsequently the Sears Group) bought a controlling interest in Lewis's Investment Trust and in doing so acquired Selfridges.

- In 1998 the company was de-merged from the Sears Group and floated on the London Stock Exchange.

- In 2003 Galen Weston purchased Selfridges. He and his wife Hilary are closely involved with the development and growth of the company.

- In the year ended 31 January 2007, Selfridges' sales rose by 11 per cent to £597 million and grew profit by 33 per cent to £65 million.

- Galen Weston is Chairman of Selfridges and, in January 2004, Allan Leighton was appointed Deputy Chairman.

- Paul Kelly became Chief Executive of Selfridges in February 2004. Before that, Paul was Managing Director of Brown Thomas in Dublin for ten years. He has worked with the Weston family for over 20 years.

- Galen Weston is Chairman of the premier luxury goods company which, as well as Selfridges, includes Holt Renfrew in Canada and Brown Thomas in Ireland.