

## From fudge to pastry, chocolate hits the sweet spot

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By Rachel Bozek

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[The Chocolate Bar](#)  
112 Quimby St., Westfield

Homemade chocolate gelato in February? Why not? Chocolatier for 25 years

### [Choc-O-Pain French Bakery & Cafe](#)

**530 Jersey City Ave., Jersey City**  
**157 First St., Hoboken**

Chocolate lovers looking for a change of pace in their dessert selections – or those who need to be conscious of their gluten intake – need look no further than Choc-O-Pain's flourless chocolate cake, aka Chocolate Heaven. "It is an incredibly rich and intensely chocolate cake and is flour-free, which provides a good choice for gluten-sensitive customers," said owner Clemence Danko.

[Montclair Bread Company.](#)

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[Essex Junction Craft Kitchen & Bar](#)

**90 Washington St., Bloomfield**

Essex Junction is new to the restaurant scene, but its white chocolate bread pudding is no new kid on the block. Ten years ago, Chef Doug Vincent needed a chocolate recipe for a banquet menu. With some direction from his then 5-year-old daughter, Vincent came up with his recipe for white chocolate bread pudding. "I've done versions with various breads, textural things like dried fruit and nuts, and of course, topping it off with fun sauces, spices and other crunchy goodies," he said. Note: As of deadline, the Essex Junction Craft Kitchen & Bar is set to open in mid-January. For the latest updates, go to [www.thejunctionusa.com](http://www.thejunctionusa.com).

[Mara's Cafe and Bakery](#)

**25 East Main St., Denville**

Chocolate mousse. Brownies. Chocolate-dipped cannoli with chocolate chip cream. And that's just the tip of the very, very sweet iceberg at Mara's. With a central baking facility in Morristown, Mara's offers its array of homemade desserts to its diners as well as a number of restaurants in the area. The cafe also serves Ghirardelli hot chocolate, which barista Alyssa Deriggi says is popular among kids as well as adults. In addition to its Denville digs, Mara's has locations in Berkeley Heights, Fanwood and South Orange.

[Montclair Bread Company](#)

**113 Walnut St., Montclair**

As recently as last year, the Montclair Bread Company was a tiny (albeit super busy) bakery near the Walnut Street train station. In recent months, the business has expanded to include a nearby wholesale baking and education facility, a cafe at the local library, and a three-wheeled mobile vending vehicle (nicknamed Mimi Sprinkles). Among the myriad creative concepts for MBC's doughnuts are a few noteworthy chocolate options. "When working with chocolate, I like to combine different textures and really layer flavors," said owner and head baker Rachel Crampsey. "A couple of good examples would be our Just Chocolate doughnut, which starts with a velvety dark chocolate ganache and is topped with a healthy dose of shaved dark chocolate. I also created a mocha doughnut. It's a buttermilk chocolate cake dough glazed with an espresso-infused white chocolate ganache and topped with chocolate coffee beans."

[Splurge Bakery](#)

**105 Main St., Millburn**

Open since 2010, Splurge Bakery has become a local go-to spot for personalized orders, from baby announcements to birthdays to business promotions and more. Beyond Splurge's custom cookies, though, is a sweet world of confections that range from everyday to fancy. Michele Silver, an Essex County resident, makes a point to bring her 6-year-old daughter to Splurge when treats are in order. "The minute I tasted one of Splurge Bakery's