

FOOD

Warming up this winter: 6 hot chocolates with a twist served in North Jersey

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Looking for a way to warm up after a winter stroll or a day spent sledding in the snow? Hot chocolate is just the elixir you need to get warm and make you feel like a kid again. Put away the store-bought packets, and check out some of our area's best spots to enjoy soothing, smooth and sweet hot chocolate, each with a little something extra to entice you.

Rooftop at Exchange Place, Jersey City

Emma Taylor, owner of the sensational ice cream shop Milk Sugar Love in Jersey City, has turned her attention to something a bit steamier for the winter season. She has created a signature hot chocolate made with organic milk and cream and topped with a dessert trio of vanilla marshmallow, fudge brownie and a homemade cookie, to be offered at Rooftop at Exchange Place (\$8). For an additional \$5, you can spike yours with Ancho Reyes Chile Liqueur, Frangelico Hazelnut Liqueur or Godiva Milk Chocolate Liqueur.

Go: 1 Exchange Pl., Jersey City; 551-256-7850, rooftopxp.com.

L'Arte della Pasticceria

The hot cocoa at L'Arte della Pasticceria gets a boost from the addition of Nutella. The deep chocolate isn't overly sweet, and the essence of hazelnut makes it so delectable you'll be sorry you didn't order a bigger cup — or two. Savor your hot chocolate in the pastry shop's seating area or take it to go (\$3.50).

Go: 109 E. Main St., Ramsey; 201-934-3211; larte.biz.

Raymond's, Montclair and Ridgewood

Raymond's has two locations: one in Montclair and one in Ridgewood. These two towns are already quaint and, when sprinkled with a layer of snow, are transformed into darling winter wonderlands. So, we recommend stopping by one of the Raymond's locations, taking a seat by the window and ordering a mug of hot chocolate with a marshmallow (\$5.25). The marshmallow is essential, because Raymond's uses Joanne's Homemade Marshmallows, which are basically big square chunks of gooey, sugary goodness.

Other than the classic Belgian hot chocolate, Raymond's also offers a spicy Mexican hot chocolate (\$4.50) and matcha hot chocolate (\$4.50) and a white hot chocolate (\$5).

Go: 28 Church St., Montclair; 973-744-9263. 101 E. Ridgewood Ave., Ridgewood; 201-445-5125, raymondsnj.com.

Vanillamore, Montclair

When you order a DIY hot chocolate at Vanillamore, you'll get Valhrona chocolate in a white cup, hot milk in a small pitcher and the cutest little whisk to blend it all together. The restaurant is also stunning — red brick walls, light wood counter, open stainless-steel kitchen and near floor-to-ceiling windows from which you can safely watch the snow coming down. Have your phone camera ready. You're going to want to post this on Instagram.

Go: 349 Bloomfield Ave., Montclair; 973-707-5373, vanillamore.com.

Ariane Kitchen & Bar, Verona

Perhaps the fanciest and booziest hot chocolate you'll drink this winter is from Ariane Kitchen & Bar. The steamy drink is made with sugar, cocoa powder, skim milk, vanilla extract, green Chartreuse French liqueur and a dash of kosher salt for contrast. It is topped with homemade whipped cream, whisked into stiff peaks (\$12).

Go: 706 Bloomfield Ave., Verona; 973-744-0533, arianekb.com.

Jackie & Son, South Orange

The spicy hot chocolate at Jackie & Son *really* brings the heat this winter. "For me growing up, everything that was spicy tasted better, so I love to make it," said owner Jackie Podhurst. Her hot cocoa is made with dark Belgian chocolate and spiced with cayenne and clove (\$4 for regular, \$4.75 for large). "Clove gives it that warm winter scent that we love this time of year," Podhurst says.

Go: 134 S. Orange Ave., South Orange; 973-821-5438, jackieandson.com.

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