

# Hotel Spa Chocolates

Pair a chain of luxury hotels with exotic handcrafted gourmet chocolate and you've got a match made in chocoholic heaven. Three California hotels—Shutters on the Beach, Hotel Casa Del Mar (both in Santa Monica), and Hotel Canary (in Santa Barbara)—now boast signature gourmet chocolate bars tailor-made by Katrina Markoff, chocolatier of Vosges Haut-Chocolat.

"I love Shutters," says Markoff. "It's the most spectacular, American, chic hotel, so creating a chocolate bar to match was like a dream come true for me." For the Shutters Sunset Bar, she incorporated the sea breeze (with artisanal salts), added a dash of California (with California hickory smoked almonds) and enrobed the whole thing in American flavor (deep milk chocolate). Her unique interpretation of the property in the form of chocolate was such a hit that the hotel group teamed up with her

again to develop bars for their other two properties: Casa Del Mar and Hotel Canary.

Casa del Mar's Casa Rica Bar captures Europe with rich, sensual flavors like Spanish-smoked paprika, smoked alder wood salt and Spanish roasted almonds, all enveloped in fine dark chocolate. As for the Canary Crunch Bar, it transports munchers to the Canary Islands with flavors of charred tropical fruit, crunchy plantain chips, and creamy milk chocolate—a decadent treat representing a fusion of flavors from Spain, Africa, and Latin America.

Want the taste of California without the travel? Visit [www.ShuttersBeachStyle.com](http://www.ShuttersBeachStyle.com) for a boxed set (\$32 plus tax)—or travel the world through chocolate at [www.vosgeschocolate.com](http://www.vosgeschocolate.com). A trend this sweet is bound to catch on.

—A.P.



## Milk: It Does Do a Body Good

Only one-quarter of American adults eat enough calcium-rich foods to meet their daily recommended intake for this mineral, which is 1,000 mg for adults (and bumps up to 1,200 mg after age 50). You know you need calcium for strong, osteoporosis-resistant bones, but getting plenty of this mineral also helps keep blood pressure in check, improves cholesterol numbers, makes preeclampsia in pregnancy less likely, and reduces the risk of colon cancer. As if that weren't enough of an incentive to pour a glass of skim milk, new research recently discovered that a woman's body fat goes down as her calcium intake goes up.

Most people get the majority of their dietary calcium from dairy foods, but other potential calcium sources include tofu (check the label to make sure it was processed with calcium), calcium-enriched orange juice, sardines or salmon canned with bones, baked beans, almonds, kale, broccoli, or bok choy. However, even with a

healthy diet, you might want to consider a calcium supplement for extra insurance.

Get the most out of calcium supplements by taking each pill with a meal; you can only absorb a certain amount of calcium at a time and food tends to improve calcium's absorption. There are many forms of calcium supplements you can choose and they'll all help boost your body's calcium stores. Calcium carbonate tends to be a popular choice since it's inexpensive. Some calcium carbonate supplements don't dissolve quickly enough to be usable by the body, however. To check yours, simply put a tablet in a half cup of vinegar and stir occasionally. It should be completely dissolved after thirty minutes.

If you take iron supplements, don't take your calcium and iron pills at the same time because they compete for absorption. Calcium supplements cause gas or constipation in a small number of people; if you're affected this way, try a few different forms to find one that strengthens your bones without taxing your tummy.

—Victoria Dolby Toews, MPH

