

NYC's Best Hot Chocolate

By Alia Akkam

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Cheek-whipping gusts of cold wind may be one of the season's biggest drags, but hunkering down with a steaming mug of hot chocolate is among the delicious bright spots of plunging winter temps. Here are five rich renditions of hot chocolate in New York that give you an excuse to linger inside for just a bit longer.



Hot chocolate at Max Brenner (Photo: Courtesy of Max Brenner)

City Bakery

At bi-level Union Square icon City Bakery, hot chocolate is as revered as the cafe-meets-cafeteria's signature pretzel croissants. Every February, in fact, it ushers in an annual festival devoted to the beverage, with a daily-changing roster of newfangled flavors all month long. Luckily the classic recipe, thick and creamy, is on the menu every day. Order it with a housemade gooey marshmallow bobbing on top. *3 W. 18th St., 212-366-1414, thecitybakery.com*

MarieBelle's Cacao Bar

Pushing through hordes of shoppers in SoHo can be a downer. But a seat at MarieBelle's elegant Cacao Bar, illuminated by crystal chandeliers, is a refined reward. Hot chocolate is decidedly grown-up here, with a spicy Aztec version spiked with the likes of chipotle Ancho chile, cinnamon and nutmeg. Order it mixed with water instead of milk — European style — for a thick, bold cup reminiscent of pudding. On the way out, snag a signature blue box of whiskey and champagne truffles for when those chocolate cravings rise again. *484 Broome St., 212-925-6999, mariebelle.com*

Max Brenner

The always packed Union Square chocolate playground Max Brenner swarms with kids, as it should, given the restaurant's preponderance for whimsical desserts like S'mores sundaes. Adults will find respite, too, likely while sipping one of the spot's many velvety hot chocolates. In one iteration, Max Brenner's own milk chocolate ganache is infused with sea salt and caramel, then melded with equal parts cream and milk before getting topped with a dreamy layer of whipped cream. *841 Broadway, 646-467-8803, maxbrenner.com*

Nunu Chocolates

Come to Nunu to sample the bloom-shaped, Earl Grey-filled chocolates and hand-dipped salt caramels on display, but stick around this welcoming Brooklyn retail shop and cafe for the not-too-sweet, wonderfully bitter hot chocolate. It's made with Nunu's dark chocolate shavings — available for purchase to recreate a cup at home — whisked into steamed milk. Walk it off with a wander down Atlantic Avenue, where shopping abounds. *529 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn, 917-776-7102, nunuchocolates.com*

Il Bambino

After, say, a soppressata-hot pepper-asiago-basil pesto panini at Il Bambino, a cozy Italian-Spanish mash-up in the Queens neighborhood of Astoria, a homemade brownie will tempt. But the true sweettooths will want to be tamed with hot chocolate instead. With a jolt of frothed peanut butter added to its semisweet cocoa, sugar and milk mix, it goes down like liquid candy. *34-08 31st Ave., Astoria, Queens, 718-626-0087, ilbambinonyc.com*