

NATION'S Restaurant News

Chefs riff on drinkable desserts

Bret Thorn

Dec. 4, 2013



Drinkable desserts like hot beverages, milkshakes and creamy cocktails have an enduring appeal to consumers — especially the chocolate ones.

“People love to drink chocolate,” said Mindy Segal, chef and owner of Mindy’s Hot Chocolate in Chicago.

Segal takes her hot chocolate seriously, with three basic blends for white, milk and dark chocolate drinks. She uses that base to create seasonal specialties — eggnog recently replaced pumpkin spice white chocolate — that are finished with customized ganache to let the flavors of nuanced chocolate beans come through. She has even seen customers become woozy after trying to down one of her rich namesake beverages after finishing a hamburger.

“We work hard on them,” Segal said. “We don’t just throw chocolate in a bowl and boil milk and cream and pour it over.”

Segal is not alone in her devotion to sweet beverages. Chefs across the country are responding to customers’ growing sophistication by preparing drinks using local ingredients, customizing beverages, offering drink flights, playing on classic favorites, and otherwise tapping current trends to add to their appeal. Here’s a look at some of those creations.

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Hot chocolate is served extra cozy at five-unit Max Brenner, which offers its hot chocolate, priced at \$5.95, in a Hug Mug, which is meant to be nestled in both hands. The drink is available in four flavors: Italian, with hot chocolate and vanilla cream; Mexican, with chocolate red chile, cinnamon, nutmeg and pepper; salted caramel, with chocolate, caramel sauce, sea salt and whipped cream; and Choco-pops, hot chocolate topped with crunchy chocolate wafer balls.