

the schedule: Wednesdays, for example, are croissant days, when we start the dough for the butter croissants and pains au chocolat. It takes several days from when the dough is first kneaded in the large Hobart to when it is cut and shaped into the familiar crescents and rectangles. Therefore, it is essential that we make a new batch at the same time every week or we would inevitably run out. The scraps from the croissant dough are used to make the popular weekend rolls, Bittersweet's version of the cinnamon roll, filled with brown sugar, pecans, and golden raisins. Mondays and Thursdays are chocolate shortbread days, when we bake dozens of the little turbinado sugar-coated cookies to be wrapped and packaged in Bittersweet's green bags. Sundays are macaroon days, when those French delicacies of almond, powdered sugar, and egg white are piped and baked into perfect little rounds for sandwiching a dollop of chocolate ganache.

Of course, working with all kinds of premium gourmet chocolates is one of the biggest thrills in the kitchen. Any visitor to the store can peek into the kitchen and see rows of neatly labeled Cambros on the shelves, filled with chocolates in a variety of percentages and makes. For home bakers who wonder whether using different chocolates makes a discernable difference in the final product, the answer is: it does. Switching the brand of chocolate used in the cinnamon hot chocolate cake during a test run gave it an entirely different flavor. In the end though, just as with chocolate bars, it comes down to personal preference. There is no single ideal chocolate for eating or baking, only the ones that are best suited to your taste—or, in Bittersweet's case, our customers' taste. After numerous queries from customers about the chocolates used in the kitchen, the owners started packaging chocolate "buttons" for sale in one-pound bags; test them out for yourself.

By one-thirty in the afternoon, the kitchen is winding down: the baking done for the day, cakes and brownies cooling on the racks, pans and tools cleaned and put away, task list drawn up for the next busy day. The café, however, has just gotten past the morning rush and is still awaiting its influx of afternoon customers wanting a teatime snack or a chocolate bar and evening strollers looking for dessert and coffee after dinner. As I finish cleaning up the kitchen, I look out into the store and see people poring over the truffles and candies, their children with hands pressed to the display case, exclaiming over the miniature cupcakes or baby chocolate chip cookies, everyone smiling and abuzz in the presence of so much chocolate. I can go home knowing that all the pastries I've made today are still in the store, waiting to give pleasure to everyone who enters. How could the day end on a sweeter note?

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## CHOCOLATE SHORTBREAD

*Recipe provided by Caroline Romanski*

Makes about 60 cookies

385 grams all purpose flour  
45 grams Valrhona cocoa powder  
¼ teaspoon salt  
1 pinch ground cinnamon  
285 grams soft unsalted butter  
125 grams granulated sugar  
¼ teaspoon vanilla extract  
About 2 egg yolks for egg wash  
Turbinado sugar for coating

Sift together flour, cocoa powder, salt, and cinnamon. Set aside. In a mixing bowl with paddle attachment, cream the butter with the sugar and vanilla extract just until combined—do not overbeat.

Gradually and on low speed, add the sifted flour mixture. Mix to form a smooth dough. Divide dough into two pieces and roll into logs about 15" long. Wrap the logs in plastic or parchment paper and refrigerate until firm. The dough can be stored in the freezer for up to 2 weeks.

Preheat oven to 300°. Remove a log of dough from refrigerator and let sit for about 10 minutes at room temperature to soften slightly. If you only intend to bake part of the log, cut off the appropriate portion and return the rest to the refrigerator.

Make an egg wash by combining 2 egg yolks with a little bit of water. Brush over the entire surface of the log and then sprinkle with the turbinado sugar. Cut the log into ½" slices and place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake for about 8-12 minutes, or until you can gently lift the



cookies off the paper without them breaking. Cool completely before serving.