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Photo Margo Masaoka has maternal pride for the family store.

Insets From top, DeCarlo strawberry truffles; gift boxes celebrating the Mercer Island store's 20th anniversary; French hot chocolate



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SWEET!

"This is almost identical to Mom's house—without the candy cases," says Nick Masaoka, motioning around the store with his brother Chris beside him and mother Margo packaging chocolates behind the counter. The gourmet shop in Madison Park is a new addition to the Oh! Chocolate family; the Mercer Island location just celebrated its 20th year, and there's also one in Bellevue.

The Masaokas' devotion to traditional chocolate-making started more than four decades ago with grandparents Carl and Gertie Krautheim. Eventually the whole clan got involved, making chocolate truffles, butter caramels, and French creams—which are still hand-churned ("It's not cost-effective," Nick admits, "but they're incredible"). A trip to the new space means parking on bar stools to enjoy ice cream sundaes drenched in homemade chocolate, black and whites (vanilla ice cream, soda water, and chocolate fudge sauce), or the store's own rendition of ice cream sandwiches.

Though the classic offerings here are divine, the family stays abreast of evolving palates. "Younger consumers are savvy and expect something new," says Nick. "They're more cognizant of flavors." Here's flavor: a kick-in-the-pants habanera-and-mango truffle, syrah-wine-and-currant caramels, and a Figaro truffle layered with fig and cabernet. There's also chocolate-dipped Oreo and graham crackers. "It's great," Nick beams about the whole sweet affair. "You never get over that kid-in-a-candy-store feeling." ❁