



Hand-Made Chocolate Temptations
by Carmen Almenara

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THREE OF A KIND
South American caramel (dulce de leche)

Confiteria Maciel

For variations on a dulce de leche theme, this tucked-away bakery in south-western Sydney takes the cake... and the sponge roll, puff pastry, meringue and biscuit. Originally from Rosario in Argentina, fine pastry chef Alfredo Maciel executes some of the prettiest caramel cake art around. He uses a rich, locally made caramel for about two dozen fillings. Indulge in a duet of meringues sandwiched by a bulge of caramel or one of the delicate mini alfajores - biscuits jammed together with caramel and covered in dark or white chocolate. Caramel also comes glooped

into little pecan-topped tarts, wedged between two miniature coconut macaroons or as a neat toffee-brown thread through delicate sponge roll rounds (all \$1 each). There's even the copito, designed to look like a chocolate mountain topped with snow and filled with - you guessed it - caramel. With wife Patricia, Maciel has run this unassuming shrine to sweetness for about two years. He also sells danishes and sugary breakfast crossants known as facturas. And, yes, they come in caramel-filled versions (\$8 a dozen). If all that milk and sugar is too much, try the freshly-baked empanadas (\$2.50).
Shop 3, 63A Brennan Street, Smithfield, 2128 3392.

Tejas del Solar

Peruvian expatriate Carmen Almenara's homemade caramel, known as manjar blanco in her birthplace, is a lighter, fudgier concoction than the thicker, stickier, more traditional version of dulce de leche. But her creation works very nicely inside an assortment of chocolate coatings,

Need to know

WHAT IS IT?

A thick, dark, sweet milk caramel, also called manjar blanco.

HOW IS IT USED?

Any sweet way you like (see below). Only genuine sweet tooths need apply.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE WITH IT?

Coffee, Inca Cola (seriously) or a bitter herbal infusion called mate.

From white to milk to dark. Based on a traditional Peruvian sweet, her fat, decadently rich tejas come stuffed with macadamia nuts, crystallised ginger, passionfruit or caramelised orange pieces, along with a big, smooth ball of manjar blanco. You'll find them in two sizes, either individually wrapped and colour-coded or disguised as pretty little chocolates (\$1.90/100g). Each one is handmade, hence the cute little bumps and bubbles. Caramel cynics, prepare to be converted.
Available at Bon Bon Fine Chocolates, ground floor, Queen Victoria Building, city, 9268 0675 or www.tejasdelsolar.com.au.

El Molino

In the heart of South American Sydney, this simple shop is just like a typical Argentinian local bakery with its spread of pastries, breads and pizza. They also make facturas (see above) which, at 60 cents each, are excellent value, either plain or filled with jam or caramel. Caramel also stars in alfajores (60 cents each).
3/105 Tangerine Street, Fairfield East, 9272 9427.
Joanna Savill

Tejas del Solar

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