



Amelia Rope Chocolate is muscling in to the luxury chocolate market, and doing so with unquestionable panache. Meet Amelia Rope, the name, face and driving force behind the brand.

The Prada of Chocolate

“Try this one,” says Amelia Rope, handing me a generous square of rose-flavoured chocolate. Never one to deny a chocolate offering, I pop the large square into my mouth where it slowly melts into a delicious puddle of smooth, velvety goodness. The rose tinge is immediately apparent, bringing to mind Turkish Delight, but ten times better. “It’s one of my best sellers,” explains Amelia. “It won a gold at the Academy of Chocolate Awards in 2011.” I am not surprised. It won over my taste buds immediately.

Amelia was not born a chocolatier: “I always wanted my own business,” she says. “But my route to chocolate

started with my father, who comes from a traditional middle class background. Women in his eyes had a secretarial qualification and that was it.” Consequently, Amelia completed her secretarial training and worked as a P.A. in a variety of offices, changing jobs every year when she found the work was not challenging her intellect.

Wanting to prove her intellectual worth, Amelia started a herbal medicine degree at the University of Westminster, but due to a lack of finances was unable to continue, instead moving on to an intensive aromatherapy course. As a qualified aromatherapist making a living was no simple feat, so after spending some time travelling Amelia found a

role in a busy doctor’s office as a Practice Manager. While this is still a long way from chocolate, it gave Amelia a grounding in business management. Seeing Thomasina Miers win *Masterchef*, Amelia thought: “I’m a bit like her. I’ll give it a go.” The next thing she knew, she was being interviewed.

“I got up very early in the morning and made little walnut bread rolls and a mackerel ceviche with pomegranates and stuff, and went off and they picked me,” she explains. She had done no food training whatsoever: “I fly by the seat of my pants,” Amelia laughs. “I turned up and everybody knew how to cook. They wanted to be chefs or reality TV stars. ‘I’ve got this all wrong,’ I thought.”



Amelia's unusual flavour combinations intrigued the judges and she made it through several rounds, winning the restaurant round along the way. After her elimination, John Torode offered some words of encouragement, saying: "You've got something in your head, you've got to do something with it." A year later they invited her back on the show. She went part time in her job and started taking courses, including a course at Valrhona in France, 'Les Bonbons de Chocolat.' This began a fascination with chocolate which clearly continues to this day. Tired of being a hamster on a wheel,

Amelia consulted a life coach. Deciding she wanted to move into food journalism she wrote to the Editor of Food Illustrated. "I wrote a card saying I would love to get into food journalism. I've been on *Masterchef*, booted off twice, but I love writing and I love food. I'd love to see you," says Amelia. "That's too much love. I didn't say that," she amends. Whatever she said, it scored her a meeting.

"I went to see him and I'd made these truffles using chocolate mint from my mother's garden. I wanted to keep them low fat, so I took butter out of

the equation and used a phenomenal honey that I bought in Borough Market that came from a monastery in Tuscany. It was chestnut honey." The Editor's response? "Forget journalism. You need a degree in journalism." He tasted a truffle and said: "This is it. You are the next Juliette Binoche in *Chocolat*."

It was this encouragement that started Amelia on the chocolate path. His placement of her on *Market Kitchen* with Tana Ramsey, coaching dipping these truffles led to enquiries and before she knew it, she was in business.



did that and then I had a vision of this flora," basically, I love flowers and some of my work is done visually. All I could see was a rose petal with chocolate at the bottom with a little bit of gold on it. Three months it took me, to work out how to crystallise rose petals with no training..." She dropped them off to food editors hoping for a single mention. Instead they were picked up by every food magazine across the nation. *Dragons Den* pursued her and orders flowed. On the hoof, she went for it, and this was the real birth of Amelia Rope Chocolate.

As Amelia chatters she unwraps another chocolate bar. "The pecan nuts, by the way, are honey roasted using Wilkin & Sons Essex Blossom Honey. This is the luxury edition, exclusive to Fortnum's," she says in an aside. The sweetness of the honey is beautifully offset by the sea salt and I gobble the offering down in seconds.

Amelia is a dynamo. She designs, develops, creates, markets, packages and sells her current range of bars. Her products are stocked in establishments such as Selfridges and Fortnum & Mason in London, Wholefoods in Glasgow, Dean & DeLuca in Dubai, Kuwait and Doha, and The Gourmet in Kuala Lumpur; amongst others.

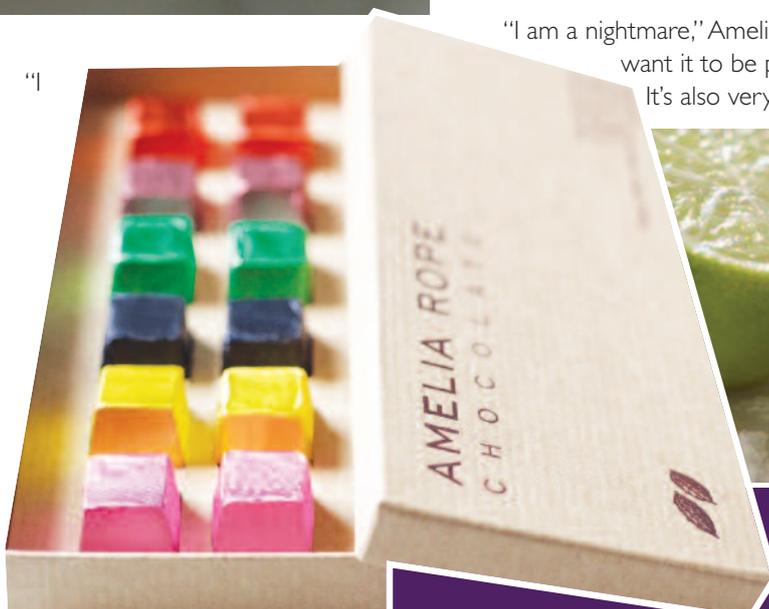
"I am a nightmare," Amelia says. "I want it to be perfect. It's also very

important for me that it is made in England. Ever since I've started I've used English suppliers." This goes from packaging to ingredients wherever possible and production. Her aromatherapy qualifications have also come to the fore in an unusual way – she creates many of her flavours by blending edible organic aromatherapy oils into the chocolate bars.

Amelia hands over another chunk of chocolate; dark hazelnut and sea salt. The flavours are not what I would instinctively choose, but that's why I am not a chocolatier – they work surprisingly well. The sweet and salty combination is beautifully complemented by the rich hazelnuts. "Last night I walked past Fortnum's and I was amazed," she says. "My chocolate is in that store. That's a special feeling."

Consuming Amelia Rope Chocolate is also a special feeling. Another chunk, white chocolate and sea salt, makes its way into my mouth. And then another; dark mandarin. Peppermint follows, then white pistachio and sea salt, lemon and sea salt, and pale coffee bean.

"My brand needs to be the Prada of chocolate," she says. "I believe 100% in these bars. I know what they can do. I want to be the biggest luxury chocolate brand in the world." With Amelia's drive, determination and flair for flavour combinations, I have no doubt she will succeed.



For more information or to order chocolate see: www.ameliarope.com