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Give "Green" Chocolate this Valentine's Day

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More than half of the country celebrates Valentine's Day every February 14th, children and adults alike. Yet did you know that chocolate is one of the worst items for being unfairly traded, and that there are, at any one time, 10,000s of child slaves working to produce that chocolate for you to enjoy?

Hearts want to help you use your purchasing power to make the chocolate you purchase for your lover or yourself as green and ethical as possible, and so we've developed these tips to guide you.



Quick Guide: Valentine's Day and Chocolate

- **61.8% consumers celebrate Valentine's Day each year:**^[i] That's a lot of chocolates, flowers, other gifts, and cards.
- **\$116.21 average spent by each person on Valentine's Day:** This amount includes all gifts.^[ii] Over \$1 billion spent in US every year on chocolate including, organic and free trade or otherwise.^[iii]
- **1,233 US locations produce chocolate and cocoa products:** These locations employ just under 39,000 people.^[iv]
- **10,299 tons worldwide fair trade chocolate trade (2008):** This number has increased from 1,153 tons in 2000.^[v]
- **15,000 child slaves produce standard cocoa products:** More than 15,000 **child slaves** are lured by promises of a better life, beaten, and forced to work in West Africa on cacao farms.^[vi]
- **The first-ever box of Valentine's Day chocolates was created in 1868:** They were made by the now-famous chocolatier Richard Cadbury.^[vii]

Take Action! Support Fair Trade Chocolate

1. **Purchase Fair Trade and Certified Organic chocolate:** Organic and fair trade standards are set by organizations such as **Fairtrade International, Equal Exchange, Quality Assurance International, and Transfair USA**. Look for their labels when shopping to be sure you're getting the fairest, most eco-friendly chocolate you can buy.
2. **Choose from the tastiest organic, free trade chocolate and cocoa products:** The Daily Green recommends **Sweet Earth Chocolates, Madécasse Chocolate, Equal Exchange Chocolate, Shaman Chocolates, and Green & Black's Organic Chocolate**. Mother Earth News recommends **Lake Champlain Chocolates, Newman's Own, Earth's Sweet Pleasures, and Divine Chocolate**. Friends of the Earth performed a survey of reviewers who rated the best organic and free trade chocolates. Have a look at the **results** the next time you plan to purchase some chocolate, and try some from the list to see for yourself.
3. **Try some unusually-flavored organic and fair trade chocolates:** **Theo** has a Spicy Chile and a Coconut Curry option you can test from among their more typical flavors.
4. **Make your own organic and free trade chocolate candies:** **Sweet Earth Chocolate** offers bulk chocolate with no minimum or maximum order. You can even make your own molds with food-grade silicone and rubber products from **Make Your Own Molds**.
5. **Reduce your consumption of conventionally-produced chocolate products:** Remember that they use pesticides, expose workers to toxic chemicals and horrible working conditions, suffer from unfair trade practices, and some even use slavery to produce their chocolate.
6. **Demand your elected officials and chocolate manufacturers take action:** Visit **Global Exchange** to see what they're doing to help ensure fair trade standards are met worldwide.



Dig Deeper: Conventionally-Produced Chocolate Products

- Read more about why conventionally-produced chocolates should be avoided at all costs at **Mother Earth News**.
- Learn about child labor and rainforest destruction at **Freegan.info**.
- Read about some of the chemicals found in conventionally-grown chocolate products at **Grinning Planet**.

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References

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