

Sweet escapes

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Sucre (3025 Magazine St.) offers a variety of gourmet chocolate bark confections studded with premium ingredients like roasted cashews, dried cherries and Maldon sea salt. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

With Valentine's Day rapidly approaching, it's an ideal time to treat yourself and the ones you love to something sweet. This year, think outside the heart-shaped box and see what these local chocolatiers have to offer.

[Blue Frog Chocolates](#) (5707 Magazine St.)

Housed in a century-old Magazine Street cottage, Blue Frog Chocolates (owned by Tulane alumnus Dr. Rick Streiffer and Ann Streiffer) has been whipping up whimsical New Orleans-themed novelty candies since 2000. Though the sweet boutique stocks classic treats like chocolate-covered strawberries, the shop is also known for its quirky creations. Share a bag of deliciously sweet yet salty dark chocolate-dipped Zapp's Cajun Crawtator chips or give your one-of-a-kind valentine a "3 Frogs" box. The store's namesake gift features three varieties of solid chocolate frogs.

[Sucre](#) (622 Conti St., 3025 Magazine St. and 3301 Veterans Memorial Blvd.)

Since opening in 2007, this dessert mecca has been satisfying local sweet cravings with its signature handcrafted French macarons, rich gelato and delectable cupcakes. Executive pastry chef Tariq Hanna's team of chocolatiers also has elevated the timeless pairing of flowers and chocolate, offering white chocolate hearts atop portions of single-bean, bittersweet chocolate embedded with crystallized rose and violet petals. The shop additionally offers Swiss milk chocolate bars packed with delicate candied rose petals and Sicilian pistachios.

[Laura's Candies](#) (331 Chartres St.)

Established in 1913, Laura's Candies is currently New Orleans' oldest candy shop. The French Quarter store specializes in creating traditional local sweets, like Creole pralines and Mississippi Mud bark, using recipes dating back to the 19th century. However, the confectionary also is known for producing chocolate with experimental flavor combinations. Encased in glossy red and white shells, the Aztec truffles boast a fiery kick of cinnamon and chili pepper, while the sumptuous Champagne truffles are filled with silky white chocolate ganache. Laura's also rents lavish chocolate fountains for special events.

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