

Cocoa Nuts

Which hot chocolate is best? **James Oliver Cury** tackles the heated debate.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **KANG KIM**

Like so much in life, hot chocolate isn't as simple as it used to be. I set out to taste a few before the holiday season and came home with 63. Determined to find the best, I warmed up every last one and assembled a panel of judges for a blind taste test. ▶

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BEST OVERALL

Vosges Haut-Chocolat La Parisienne Couture Cocoa

Chocolatier Katrina Markoff has won over fans with exotic truffle combos (curry-coconut, ginger-wasabi) and

this signature "haut" chocolate. The mix calls for milk and cream, making for an extra-rich drink with "almost puddinglike texture." Between moans and sighs, panelists said it "smells extra-chocolaty," and noted that it's so thick "it clings to the mug." A few sips will more than satisfy. (\$25 for a pound, vosgeschocolate.com)

Rach's Fave



Jacques Torres goes beyond marshmallows to dress up his famous hot chocolate (\$18 for 18 ounces, mrchocolate.com). Try one of these smart twists:

- 1. SPICE IT UP** Add a few dashes of ground chili powder to the mix before you stir in the milk or water.
- 2. BE FRUITY** Stir in some mashed banana or orange zest.
- 3. SWEETEN THE DEAL** Add a peppermint candy or a spoonful of creamy peanut butter.
- 4. WHIP IT INTO SHAPE** Reduce the milk and fold in some whipped cream to make an instant mousse.

