



Small Batch Candy Bars Made Fresh In Ann Arbor!

Candy is no different from any other food: if you start with so-so stuff, you'll end up with so-so stuff. The natural laws of the food universe very clearly say that really good candy has to start with really good raw materials. Fortunately and not surprisingly, the Candy Manufactory's list of ingredients backs up that notion. Start with the 65% dark chocolate. Then there's real vanilla. Muscovado brown sugar. Michigan honey. Jumbo runner peanuts. Cashews from southern Honduras. Local butter.

Another key difference in the flavor of Zzang! bars is that Charlie does most everything by hand. On any given day at the Candy Manufactory you'll find him at the stove cooking sugar or over the mixer making nougat. Each type of candy bar is made by layering ingredients into a metal frame. Charlie cuts individual candy bars from these frames of seventy-two or seventy-eight (depending on the candy) and lays them out onto the enrober. His assistant in candy making, Sara, takes the bars off, puts them on sheet trays, checks each for quality, then sets aside any that are slightly subpar. Once in a while, she runs back to the beginning of the line and pulls a new rack of seventy-some bars off the cart to keep Charlie in, shall we say, chocolate.

"The candy bars are particularly great when they're really super fresh," Charlie told me while I was watching him and Sara at work. To prove his point, he cut off a piece of one that had barely been on the cooling rack for more than a few minutes. And sure enough, he was right on. The bars are always good, but damn if they're not just a notch and a half better when they're really fresh. Charlie says the flavors and textures are exactly where we want them to be in the first 60 days after production so he date-stamps each box to make sure you know you're getting fresh candy in every bite.

Ari

Meet candyman Charlie Frank on the Food Network show "Kid in a Candy Store," airing Monday, May 23!



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