



Dubai chocolate

Dubai chocolate (Arabic: شوكولاتة دبي, romanized: *shūkūlātāt Dubayy*) is a style of chocolate bar filled with kadayif (chopped filo pastry) and a pistachio-tahini cream. "It was created in 2021 by Nouel Catis Omamalin, a Filipino chef, and Sarah Hamouda, a British-Egyptian engineer, after she asked him to prepare a chocolate recipe similar to the sweet dish her mother used to make during Sarah's childhood.^[1] Hamouda and her husband are the co-owners of Fix Dessert Chocolatier^[2], an Emirati chocolatier in Dubai.^[3] Dubai chocolate was popularized in 2024 by influencers on social media, especially those on TikTok, and has since been imitated by vendors worldwide^[4].

Description

Dubai chocolate is a milk chocolate bar filled with a sweet pistachio-tahini cream and kadayif (chopped filo pastry).^[5] The consistency of the filling ranges from finely ground to a paste.^[6] The creamy textures of the pistachio and tahini contrasts with the crunch of the kadayif.^[5]

Creation

Accounts vary of how Dubai chocolate was created. Sarah Hamouda, a British-Egyptian engineer living in Dubai says she created it in 2021.^{[5][7]} At the time, Hamouda was pregnant, and through her food cravings came to imagine combining chocolate, pistachio, tahini, and knafeh (a Middle Eastern dessert made of kadayif, syrup and a soft cheese). At home, Hamouda worked on developing a bar, before contacting Nouel Catis Omamalin, a Filipino culinary consultant who had trained as a pastry chef.^[5]

In his account of Dubai chocolate's creation, Omamalin said the pair wanted to create a chocolate bar with the flavour of a dessert. As his favourite Arabic dessert was knafeh, and because he thought it would have an appealing crunch and nostalgic value, Omamalin suggested a chocolate bar using its flavors. Together, they developed the chocolate, forming a partnership and the online shop Fix Dessert Chocolatier,^[8] which in 2022 launched "Can't Get Knafeh of It".^[9]

Dubai Chocolate



Type	<u>Chocolate bar</u>
Place of origin	<u>United Arab Emirates</u>
Region or state	<u>Dubai</u>
Invented	2021
Main ingredients	<u>Milk chocolate</u> , <u>pistachio</u> <u>butter</u> , <u>tahini</u> , <u>kadayif</u>

[Media: Dubai Chocolate](#)

Can't Get Knafeh contained pistachio, tahini and kadayif, and was covered in yellow and green patterns.^[9] Bars were made by hand, the interiors piped; a team working six to eight hours would produce 25 bars a day. Omamalin, who had by the launch left the partnership, kept working with Hamouda, saying he was doing so "as a friend".^[8] Over the following year, they continued to modify the recipe, until early 2023 when Hamouda said they had "finally... nailed it".^[5] Each bar was sold for £16 (US\$19.72), initially at a rate of one per week.^[9]

With a small marketing budget, Fix relied on social media influencers to promote the chocolate, who tasted and reviewed it on camera. The interior's bright colors have been credited with some of the product's success, as the visual appeal created is important on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.^[6] It first gained popularity in 2024.^{[10][7]}

Dubai was viewed as a trendy location among young people, particularly with social media influencers.^[6] Bobby Ghosh of *TIME* magazine concludes the candy as a successful form of gastrodiplomacy due to its "cultural confidence" incorporating ingredients readily available in its home Middle East region, moreso an efficient work of spontaneous soft power than the city's rapid acquisition of foreign fine art and high-rise development which grants it a perceived negative global image laden of shallow opulence.^[11]



A Dubai-style chocolate sold in South Korea

Expansion

As the product gained popularity, large scale manufacturers such as Lindt began to produce and market them as Dubai Chocolate. In Germany, an importer of a clone of Fix Dubai Chocolate issued a cease-and-desist letter to the manufacturer Lindt, Aldi and Lidl because it was not produced in Dubai.^[12] While geographical indications are in principle protectable under the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement, the United Arab Emirates has not signed the agreement.^[13] According to most legal scholars, the term "Dubai chocolate" is already a generic trademark in the EU market and does not contain any geographical indication.^[14]

In January 2025, a German court in Cologne decided that Aldi has to stop selling its product named "Alyan Dubai Handmade Chocolate" on the ground it might mislead consumers that the chocolate has been produced in Dubai while it is actually produced in Turkey.^[15] In the UK, the popularity of the Lindt variety of the chocolate was such that the supermarket chain Waitrose imposed purchase limits of two bars per customer.^[6]



A Dubai chocolate-flavoured ice cream

The popularity of Dubai chocolate has exacerbated the shortage of pistachios worldwide since 2024.^[16]

Studies and allergens

A study by the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Consumer Protection tested eight imported samples of "Dubai chocolate", five from the United Arab Emirates and three from Turkey. It found that all eight samples were considered "defective". Five of the products sampled contained fats other than cocoa butter, which is not permitted in products labelled "chocolate" in Germany. The study also found that five samples, all from the same producer in the UAE, were "unfit for consumption" due to contamination in the manufacturing process (they contained excessive levels of a substance that is considered a probable carcinogen (glycidyl fatty acid esters, 3-MCPD), resulting from the use of low-quality palm oil). All three samples from Turkey were found to contain traces of undeclared sesame, usually as tahini, which may be dangerous for people allergic to sesame. A screening also revealed high levels of mold toxins (aflatoxins) in the pistachio component of one sample.^{[17][18]}

See also

- List of chocolate-covered foods
- List of candies
- Al Nassma Chocolate

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