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## Interview with Liz Marx of Sweet Nuit Chocolates

Margaret: Welcome everyone, this is Margaret Floyd of Eat Naked and I'm delighted to be talking today with Liz Marx, the founder and chocolate artist of Sweet Nuit chocolates. Hi Liz!

Liz: Hi! Great to be here!

Margaret: So tell me a little. You have gone from glass artist to chocolate maker. Not really the usual career path. Tell me a little about how you got from A to B.

Liz: Well, let's see. I would say it's about a year and half ago. I'll preface this by saying that I find out now that they're both very temperamental lovers because they're both these super-cold liquids. It's really very ironic that I find myself working with this chocolate after doing glass for over 25 years. I've always done a lot of carving images and doing waxes in glass for years and years. And I used to bring the molds to parties and just fill them with regular chocolate chips and people would go "Ooo! Aahh!" you know. And it was so much fun to use the images that I have, my molds in the glass world, for chocolate.

And then I started getting really serious with it and I knew that I needed to come up with a healthy chocolate because with just the regular commercial chocolate I felt like I was poisoning people. So it was time to get serious with the beauty on both levels: health-wise as well as visual.

Margaret: Well one of the most striking things about your chocolate aside from how absolutely delicious it is, are these molds that you use. What inspires them?

Liz: Well you know, I think a lot of the molds I've had for years in the studio, because I do not only large cast glass objects and architectural decorative elements as well in Liz Marx studios, but also smaller jewelry which I started doing about five years ago. So I started carving these smaller molds out for doing the jewelry and that's what I started putting the chocolate in. And then once I was doing the chocolate the visions I have are endless of what I can do with the chocolate now. Because it's way more immediate and whimsical and fun than the glass work ever was.

So I'm inspired by nature, and by spiritual imagery as well. Those two as well as now thinking about the animal kingdom. You know it's endless. I only have so much cash flow for mold material and only so much time so I need to hone it in, but mostly it's nature and spirit that are the two areas that really inspire. And both are endless, right? Infinite.

Margaret: Absolutely, and they're so stunning! Another piece that's so stunning is this gold dusting. What is that?

Liz: Well you know those gold flakes you see on pastry over the years or on chocolate, it's kind of a gold flake that they use. The company that I buy from does this in a pulverized form and it gets dusted on there. You know, food-safe gold dust. And what I find is it just highlights the imagery. I've also been playing with other things, like

turmeric powder can also highlight it. So that's another area where I'm off and running.

Margaret: Well let's talk about the chocolate itself. You moved away from chocolate chips and you're using raw chocolate that's never heated above 113 degrees. Can you explain why that's important?

Liz: Yeah. Cacao, the cocoa bean, it has that other term "food of the gods." The cocoa bean is chock-full of nutrients. It's one of the highest anti-oxidants and that's why there's this whole craze about dark chocolate being good for antioxidants, good for the heart, you know that all started. But actually that's true. What raw cacao does is that because it's in its raw form it compounds itself and you get more bang for the buck. It's way higher in its raw cacao form than once it's been roasted and put into dark chocolate. And as an image of that scale it's as though if dark chocolate is 30% to raw cacao is 100%. And blue berries are like 10% in that antioxidant level.

Margaret: That's great.

Liz: I'll add to it that raw cacao is super high in magnesium in its raw form. And that's the #1 thing that we're deficient in the west with is magnesium. The beauty of magnesium is that it relieves stress and the irony is that here we are in the west, stressed out and low in magnesium. So it's great for that. It's great for muscles and bones. Raw cacao has sulphur in it so it's great for you hair. It's an all-around beautiful thing!

Margaret: You can almost think of it as a nutritional supplement.

Liz: Yeah, it really is. Which is why I use a lot of different superfoods in it.

Margaret: Well let's talk about that. What superfoods do you put in there?

Liz: Well, I also use Maca in the recipe. Mind you the amount of Maca is low, so in all of this it's not as if I'm prescribing this for somebody. I go for taste first and then if it happens to be off the charts in its healthiness, great! But it's got Maca in it which is also a superfood, which once again it's this bang for the buck. Maca, mesquite, those kinds of superfoods. And they have beautiful tastes to them. The Maca has a kind of vanilla-y cream kind of taste and it's also really great at balancing the endocrine system so that it's a really beautiful hormone balancer. Which, you know, we can all use that, males and females. And it's especially helpful, Maca, not in the amounts such as this but used as a superfood it's really great for women in menopause because it really balances the hormones.

I also use mesquite which is also a super food. It's also high in magnesium. And I use them more for the taste because it adds this kind of complexity to it.

Margaret: And you really can taste it. I mean it's almost indescribable. Honestly I've eaten a lot of chocolate in my life and I've never tasted chocolate like this. I mean "complex" doesn't even begin to touch it.

Let's talk about the sugar that you use because of course normally the downside of chocolate is the sugar. You use coconut sugar, which is a personal favorite of mine, and you also use Jerusalem artichoke, and I have to say I've never heard of that being used as a sweetener before. So how did you think of using that?

take it all off.

Liz: You know I'd heard of it through David Wolfe's centre Tree of Live, Viva Pure puts it out. And now they're not, so I buy it from another source. But Jerusalem artichoke syrup is also really low on the glycemic index and it's also really good for the intestinal tract. It's got all the prebiotics which then feed the probiotics which help with the good flora. So it's a really good sweetener for people who have candida or who are watching their blood sugar levels. You know, diabetic kind of awareness. Both of those sweeteners work to combat what normally would be high glycemic sugars that are just the killers that are out there. You know the processed cane sugars and you know even honey gets to be higher on the glycemic index.

And then it's the taste again. It's got this kind of caramel-y taste. I was using the Yaçon syrup but I switched over to Jerusalem because it has this great malty taste to it.

Margaret: Yum.

Liz: Yeah. And then the coconut sugar too has that great caramel-y taste to it. Although I did find there's a lot of finicky-ness to the coconut sugar. I used to make smoothies with it and my chias, and the chia seeds would normally solidify and gel, but with the coconut sugar it throws it way off. So I use both and it's working.

Margaret: Well when we ate your chocolate for the first time, I can say that we literally felt love. You could taste the emotion that went into the chocolate. So tell me a little bit about how you feel as you're making these chocolates. I mean, am I just making this up and loving the flavor so much that it felt like love? Or is there truly some kind of intention that you send into them?

Liz: Thanks. Again, it's funny how many people comment on that or they comment on this high vibration. You know it's either that they say "Wow, I feel like I'm eating love" or that it's a high vibration. Well first of all I think, I love making the chocolate. I've had a love affair with chocolate for as long as I can remember so I do really get it when they say "food of the gods". Really there is this astounding property to the cocoa bean. So that comes into as well as yeah, I do really love making it. I love casting it. I love doing the images.

A few years back in my art studio I really tapped into really becoming a sacred practice creating art. I really set an intention when I walk into the studio. I hadn't being doing it before then. I was just kind of luckily being the vehicle and was almost mindless about it, and then I really realized one day that this is really a gift to share and a gift that I've been blessed with, so in the creative process has now become a really sacred ritual for me. So I've brought that into the kitchen when I make the chocolates so between the ingredients, the beauty of it, my love of it, and my being the channel, it's happening!

Margaret: Well you can really, really taste it. I mean it's almost indescribable, but that's the best way I can describe it is literally it felt like I was eating love. It was wild. And you know, we think about that from a business perspective, and I'm not sure what your intentions are from a growth perspective, but is this something as you scale up, do you plan on bringing other people in to help you make the chocolates and is this something you plan on bringing in? This kind of intention and the sacredness around that? Is that something you want to teach other people and maintain that as it grows. Have you given some thought to that?

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Liz: You know I have thought about it and thanks for asking because it is something I would have. I absolutely want the business to grow and to partner up with someone to do it on a larger scale and I think one of the strong pre-requisites would be to keep it a strong and sacred space. A place of love. You know we all feel it when we eat in a restaurant when there's a loving energy put in to the food you can feel it, you know maybe it's a small family-owned restaurant. Who knows? We can just pick up on it. Places where we walk in to eat and we can feel that the vibration is at a higher vibration and everything just gets digested better through that. So I have no doubt there's a way to keep it on a larger scale and set the intentions and even set a daily ritual and a daily checking in with each other and acknowledging what we're doing here and then moving it forward.

I have people who've helped me make the chocolate so far and we really have that in place. It also takes it out of the commerce realm and puts it into a sacred space of creation and it doesn't just mean production at all. And it's simple. In many ways it seems simple. You're absolutely right – how to keep that in there, it's a good question. But I think we're so trained in "that's a trade" and "that's an art", but I think we're in a time where it bridges together almost effortlessly. It's kind of knocking at the door we just have to open it.

Margaret: Yeah, that's a good analogy. So then let's talk about how you bring this intention to the other part from the business perspective and that's the sourcing of the chocolate, because you're not just using any chocolate.

Liz: I was using a source for a while from Ecuador that was wonderful but it was just a little too inconsistent. You know, finding raw cacao and really certifying that it is raw is a really big deal. I'm sure any listeners and readers are aware of how this has been. You know David Wolfe went to monitor to make sure that yes, they are in fact processing it in the way that it needs to be processed so that it's raw. That's a really big deal in the chocolate world, or in the raw cacao world I should say.

There are two pros and cons of the raw cacao. We've gone through the pros of it, but the other part is that it becomes a much more unstable kind of a product to use because one batch is different from the next, it's not all dead and arriving DOA and so it's always the same. You know every time you take a Hershey bar, it's a Hershey bar. it's what it is.

So I've really had to play with different sources to keep it more consistent. There were times when I'd get it and really have to tweak the recipe to match the more sourness of the cocoa bean, or the roasty taste (even though it wasn't roasted) of the cocoa powder, and oh my goodness..

This has been part of this whole year and a half of narrowing it down. So I have happily within the last couple of months honed into an Indonesian cacao that's consistent. Bag after bag it keeps its consistency, which has really helped. So all of this now is now Indonesian, but in the raw cacao butter and powder it's still partly Indonesian and partly Ecuadorian.

Margaret: Interesting. We don't think of that. I mean it makes sense, it's a living food so those inconsistencies are really natural, but it's not something that we think of, or at least it's not something I would have thought of so it's a really interesting consideration.

take it all off.

Liz: You know I'll just throw it in that it's the exact same issues that I used to go through in the glass world. You have cobalt powder and one minute the cobalt for the glass is deep, deep blue, and then I'd use cobalt powder another time and it was diluted down. So you know every mineral from everywhere on this planet is different. Every source is different. There are as many cocoa bean varieties as there are coffee bean varieties, which was a total eye-opener for me in the chocolate world because we're just not used to, like you're saying, how different it is when it's in its raw form.

Margaret: So tell me then, when you're making the chocolate do you sample?

Liz: Oh are you kidding?? That's the best part of the job! I get to eat it as much chocolate and believe me I eat a lot of chocolate now. And I could never do this if it was sweetened with funky sugar, I mean, I eat a lot of chocolate and I have to say I'm blessed coming down in the morning and eating a piece and swish dial wake up with chocolate! So yeah, I taste it every time. Yup. It's one of the joys.

Margaret: Definitely. So you've got a few Valentine's Day specials I understand. Valentine's Day is right around the corner so can you share what they are?

Liz: Yeah! If you go to my website Sweetnuit.com you'll see there's an assorted box of either two or three layers of the little petite Sweet Nuit images which are hearts, love birds, moons, and just this beautiful collection that I put together for the holiday. And they're just sweet as can be in this little box with a little window through to see in and they make a beautiful gift. The two layers are \$48 and the bigger one is \$70 and that's three layers. And we ship anywhere in the country. We put it with a sweat proof icepack in a little box, and the shipping cost is additional because we have to do it two-day, but we ship anywhere in the country. Taking orders as we speak. And it's fun to do the holidays. It's really fun.

I mean people laugh because they end up with a gift and they don't want to give it away, so what I did this holiday is I said if the orders come in before the 7<sup>th</sup> of February I'll throw in a little chocolate bar for them too, because otherwise they're going to have trouble giving it away.

Margaret: Oh that's excellent. Good incentive. So order your Valentine's Day box before February 7<sup>th</sup> and get your own chocolate bar! Duly noted.

Well, thank you so much Liz, for taking the time and sharing about your magical chocolate world.

Liz: Well thank you for asking me to be on. It's beautiful work that you're doing. And just lovely, lovely, lovely. I love the name. Eat Naked is just the best.

Margaret: Well I love to find you because this is truly naked chocolate. So you're a great fit and I'm really excited to share your work with the naked community. Thank you so much!

Liz: Thank you again! My best to you all. My best to you. Bye!