



Cookies at Eleni's,
Chelsea Market

Well-Treated

Alex Féthière indulges his sweet tooth at three of New York's tastiest downtown sugar stops

At *Pâtisserie Ceci-Cela*, 55 Spring Street (tel. 212.274.9179), the raspberries in the Napoleons taste as though they've parachuted from the bush into the custard, and the crême-brûlée retains its delicately-crisped lid despite its repose in a dessert cooler. If you're on a quest for French pastries with an uncommon freshness, even in individual ingredients, you've come to the right place. In addition to a wide range of fresh pastries, they also sell handmade parbaked croissants and viennoiseries with instructions for their completion at home.

The Sweet Life, at 63 Hester Street (tel. 212.598.0092), is a sweet shop that tucks its cosmopolitan stock behind a small-town façade. Tea Forte's pyramidal handmade silken tea bags produce an unparalleled cup with style. The Sterling Truffle is a colorfully hand-painted truffle with contrasting tiers of chocolate flavored with hazelnut puree, white chocolate with caramel, dark chocolate and a whisper of ground hazelnuts. Try

Dupont D'Isigny's French caramels with fruit, chocolate, and hazelnuts. Knipschildt's handmade Valrhona chocolates come in an artisanal handmade paper box. For those seeking to sweeten a specific event, confections like the classic boy/girl cigars reinterpreted in kosher chocolate, bouquets of color-coded baby footprint lollipops, or a dozen chocolate long-stemmed roses are available.

Pastry painters *Eleni's*, 75 Ninth Avenue, in Chelsea Market (tel. 212.255.7990), have an "art cookie" for every season. They also sell brownies, cakes, cupcakes, and candy. Gift tins of cookies (\$25-\$65) celebrate everything from butterflies (pictured above) to shoes to Yankee Stadium, with hand-frosted flair. Eleni's will even print photos in frosting on cookies with astonishing resolution and precision. Brownies are available in standard square and neat heart-shapes; their cousins, the butterscotch coconut graham cracker walnut bars, are a marvel of flavor and texture. As well as licorice and gumballs, over a dozen shades and flavors of cupcake (\$24/12) populate the shelves. ■