



Pierre Zimmermann

# Giving Life to Old World Traditions in the New World

By **Vivien Bui**, Guittard Chocolate Company

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t Guittard, we've always believed that our customers make us a better company – they inspire us and reaffirm our purpose. Our friendship with Master Baker Pierre Zimmermann, owner of La Fournette bakery in Chicago, is a testament to that dynamic.

He is a longtime friend of Guittard, and we share many of the same passions – whether it's running a multi-generational family business, crafting the finest products or pushing the limits of innovation, creativity and inspiration, we're kindred spirits. In the spirit of camaraderie and as we embark on the launch of our Couverture line, there was no better time than now to sit down with Pierre, himself, to talk all things inspiration, creativity, family business and, of course, chocolate.



**Pierre Zimmermann** has a star-studded resume. He won the Bakery World Cup as a team member in 1996, and then in 2008 as the coach of the French team. In 2016, the Master Baker co-founded the Intergalactic Bakers Federation, an international nonprofit dedicated to baking a better world through providing education and volunteer work to bakers everywhere.

As a fourth-generation baker in his family, Zimmermann grew up in a playground of butter, flour and chocolate – something that ignited his passion for the craft early on. He took that spark and ran with it, becoming an apprentice in Strasbourg at only 14-years old and pursuing a master's degree in pastry before he hit 20. When he started to compete in pastry competitions, he won first in Strasbourg and second in all of France.

Joining the family bakery in Alsace, La Patisserie Zimmermann, wasn't a given. But when he and his sister would join the team during the busy holiday season, Zimmermann quickly learned how much he enjoyed their bustling kitchen environment, eventually taking over the company in 1996.

Around that time, an old colleague from his apprenticeship won the chocolate title at the World Chocolate Masters, where Zimmermann won the World Cup of Bread Baking title. This colleague was Jacquy Pfeiffer, and he happened to be opening the French Pastry School in Chicago (with Sebastien Canonne). When the winners' names were published, Pfeiffer recognized Zimmermann and called him up to help with the breakfast pastry and bread section of his new school. Zimmerman came to Chicago 17 times in the next ten years to teach, falling more in love with the city every time.

This growing affection towards Chicago would soon change his life. When he turned 45, his friends started talking about retiring – a notion that struck terror in Zimmermann and his wife, Michele. He felt that he had his whole life ahead of him and wasn't ready to start winding down yet. When he contemplated where to start this new life, he thought of the windy city. It had a neighborhood feel, was close to a great lake, and full of greenery.

This came with questions. How would they be able to close their existing bakery, one that had been successfully functioning for generations? How would they sell all the equipment and find new homes for the apprentices working at their bakery? What does it take to run a business and start over in America? It wasn't an easy decision, but it was a team decision. In 2010, Pierre and Michele Zimmermann moved to Chicago with their two sons and embarked on the next leg of their journey.

At first, learning how to speak English was, he recalls, "experimental at best." While there

were ups and downs, the novelty of their adventure kept things interesting. While they were building their project, a French bakery in Old Town, Zimmermann taught at The French Pastry School full time. He sent out a survey to his students with prospective names, wanting something French and highlighting their artisanal craft. The winning name was La Fournette – meaning "a little oven." Fourteen years later, La Fournette is still just as dedicated to the balance of innovation and tradition that has defined Pierre Zimmermann's work. His latest project is a macaron box inspired by the iconic architect and Chicagoan Frank Lloyd Wright, replete with the color palette of stained-glass windows. And now, their sons have joined the kitchen, another generation continuing the age-old tradition of practicing an old-world craft in the new world.

One of the early choices Zimmermann made for La Fournette was to seek out products that would both deliver on his quality expectations and help him tell his company story. Guittard Chocolate's focus on flavor and history as a five-generation family business with roots in French tradition was a natural fit. Recently, while experimenting to improve both flavor and shelf life of his macarons, Zimmermann developed a raspberry white chocolate ganache made with Guittard 31% Creme Francaise Couverture, making it more shelf stable, but also providing a new decadent taste to La Fournette's loyal customers.





Always trying to keep things fresh and relevant, Zimmermann created the “Old Fashioned” Whiskey Macaron, a unique flavor collaboration between Guittard and La Fournette; he pairs a caramel shell with an old-fashioned-inspired ganache, which includes bourbon, bitters, orange zest and two Guittard products from the Guittard Couverture line: the 41% Eclipse du Soleil and the 72% Coucher du Soleil.

In the spirit of our devotion to the craft of chocolate, brought to life by Pierre Zimmermann’s devotion to the craft of pastry, we present this recipe to try in your own kitchen:

## “OLD FASHIONED” WHISKEY MACARONS

### Caramel Shells

- 250 g natural almond flour
- 250 g confectioner’s sugar

- 194 g aged egg whites, divided
- 250 g sucrose
- 63 g water
- 20 g natural caramel color
- Chopped hazelnuts, as needed

**Total weight:** 1027 grams

1. Process the almond powder with the confectioner’s sugar in a Robot Coupe® and let it dry.
2. Fold in the 100 g of the aged egg whites and the caramel color and mix until homogenized.
3. Boil the sucrose and water to 248°F (120°C).
4. Do not stir the syrup after it boils, or it will crystallize.
5. Whisk 94 g of the egg whites in a stand mixer. Pour the hot sugar over the whites and whisk until the meringue is stiff but still shiny and the meringue reaches 122°F (50°C).

6. Fold the meringue into the almond mixture until it becomes glossy and slightly runny.
7. Pipe onto a silicone mat or parchment paper.
8. Sprinkle chopped hazelnuts on top.
9. Let dry until you get a skin on top.
10. Bake at 300°F (149°C) for 12 minutes in a convection oven with the vent open.
11. Let cool.

### 'Old Fashioned' Whiskey Filling

- 60 g glucose
- 240 g cream
- 210 g sugar
- 80 g Guittard Eclipse du Soleil 41% Milk Chocolate
- 160 g Guittard Coucher du Soleil 72% Dark Chocolate
- 150 g bourbon whiskey
- 70 g butter
- Bitters, to taste
- Zest of 2 oranges

**Total Weight:** 980 g

1. Boil the cream and the glucose.
2. Meanwhile, make a dry caramel with the sugar.
3. Add the hot cream to stop the cooking process of the caramel.
4. Pour over the chocolates.
5. Add the whiskey, bitters, orange zest and butter.
6. Hand blend it, cover it and let it rest overnight in a cooler.

