

Nestlé's ruby chocolate debuts in Japan with KitKats, just in time for Valentine's Day

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Nestle struck a deal with Zurich-based Barry Callebaut AG, the developer of ruby chocolate, giving it exclusive rights for six months to the breakthrough product with a pinkish hue and a natural berry flavour that's sour yet sweet. The ruby chocolates will go on sale at KitKat boutiques in Japan and South Korea as well as online very soon, ensuring chocolate lovers will have access to the treat before the Feb 14 holiday.

While Japan has seen many colours and flavours for KitKats before - its penchant for eccentric flavours such as wasabi or Hokkaido melon has attracted both locals and tourists - this is the first-time ruby chocolate is going on sale since Barry Callebaut announced the innovation in September.

"Japan is the market that has made KitKat so iconic in terms of all the different flavours they've developed," Sandra Martinez, Nestlé's global head of confectionery, said in an interview. "This makes Japan the ideal market to go with this news, and KitKat is a brand that's modern and connects well with millennials, so it's the right brand to put the first ruby chocolate in the world."

The move also underscores Nestlé's commitment to the KitKat brand, even after taking a major step away from chocolate this week by selling its U.S. confectionery unit to Italian Nutella maker Ferrero SpA. The US\$2.8 billion (S\$3.7 billion) sale of the business, which includes Butterfinger and Baby Ruth candy bars, comes as Nestle plans to focus on healthier and faster-growing categories like coffee, pet food and water.