

## Boulevard's Organic Dark Dairy-Free Hot Chocolate (Vegan, Gluten-Free, Soy-Free)

Rushing inside to escape the chilly wind (yeah, it gets cold in Vegas too), my eyes lit up when I spotted two canisters of Boulevard's Organic Dairy-Free Hot Chocolate Mixes. One was their regular selection, sweetened with organic evaporated cane juice, while the other was sugar-free and sweetened with organic erythritol (fermented glucose). I am a bit shy with "sugar-free" so I went for the regular Sweet-Dark variety first. I heated some unsweetened almond milk (not knowing how sweet the mix might be) and stirred in a full 2 tablespoons (the upper end of what was directed). I quite literally melted into the couch with the warm mug and almost immediately lost myself in the luxury of this rich melted chocolate.

It was smooth, mellow, and not too sweet. Boulevard definitely goes for deep and dark with their hot chocolate; this one was similar in flavor to a 60% or 70% bittersweet chocolate, minus the bitter. In my opinion, the lesser amount of sugar makes it a perfect dairy-free option. If you are seeking more of a dessert, then you can easily dress it up with a jumbo marshmallow (I used Jake Bakes homemade marshmallows, yum!), or simply prepare it with a regular or vanilla milk alternative, which tend to add sweetness to anything they touch. And of course, if you are in a dark chocolate mood, you can stick with your favorite unsweetened milk alternative. For a richer, dessert like experience, I would swirl in some coconut cream or regular coconut milk and top with a giant marshmallow (or two).

When I decided to sample the sugar-free variety, I kept with the theme by using my standard unsweetened almond milk. I actually thought this would be the wisest choice overall, as some sugar-free sweeteners tend to overpower a bit. Yet, to my great surprise, this hot chocolate was barely sweet at all. It still had that full-bodied feel and rich chocolate taste, but in my opinion it lacked that little bit of sweetness that defines hot cocoa. Just the smallest dash of stevia seemed to do the trick while keeping the beverage sugar-free. I will say that there was no funny aftertaste, nor did I detect any "off" or chemical-like taste, which is so common with sugar-free items. This was a definite plus, but since I crave just a tad more indulgence, I will probably stick with the regular Dark Dairy-Free Hot Chocolate from Boulevards.

While Boulevard's is an everyday delight I could get used to, it is also a wonderful gift item for the milk allergic or lactose intolerant on your list. It will fit nicely to any gift basket for adults (think about adding a cool mug, a bag of good marshmallows, and some candy canes for stir sticks), yet the fun character on the canister makes it a fun treat (or stocking stuffer) for kids too.

Boulevard's hot chocolate mixes are certified organic and kosher. They do make three varieties, one of which contains milk, so be sure to choose a canister that is specifically labeled as "dairy-free." I am sure these delights will appear in stores, but should you have trouble finding them, Boulevards sells their products direct via their website: [www.blvdsorganics.com](http://www.blvdsorganics.com). This is a third party review by Alisa Fleming, author of *Go Dairy Free: The Guide & Cookbook*. For more information and to purchase this product, see the Boulevard's website.