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Chocilo's Peek into Boutique Chocolate Crafting Amid Cocoa Price Surge

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Chocilo Melbourne, a family-run chocolatier, offers a glimpse into the art of boutique chocolate making as soaring cocoa prices challenge the industry. With global cocoa costs doubling since 2023 due to supply chain disruptions, this article explores how Chocilo maintains quality, navigates economic pressures, and delivers premium chocolates from its Ivanhoe base.

Chocilo Melbourne, the retail arm of Chocolatier Australia, has thrived since 1985, crafting exquisite chocolates in its Heidelberg factory.

Owners Joanne and Bruce Nethercote shared insights into their meticulous process during a recent open day, emphasizing handcrafted techniques using couverture chocolate—a high-quality blend with extra cocoa butter for a smooth finish. “We source the finest cocoa, but prices are squeezing us,” Joanne told *Banyule Business* (2018). Global cocoa prices, driven by West African supply shortages and climate impacts, hit \$10,000 per ton in 2024, per the International Cocoa Organization, forcing small producers like Chocilo to absorb costs or innovate.

Despite economic headwinds, Chocilo’s commitment to quality shines. Their Ivanhoe café and shop, located at 244 Waterdale Road, Victoria, offers personalized treats like chocolate footy boots and smash cakes, drawing locals and tourists. “There’s no middle market for chocolate anymore,” Bruce noted, highlighting the divide between mass-produced brands and artisanal offerings (*Banyule Business*, 2018). Their use of local suppliers, like St David’s Dairy for milk, supports Melbourne’s economy while ensuring freshness. However, rising input costs, including energy and labor, strain margins, with Australia’s inflation rate at 3.8% in 2025 adding pressure (Australian Bureau of Statistics).

Chocilo’s resilience lies in community focus and innovation. They employ local youth, donate to the Olivia Newton John Cancer Wellness & Research Centre, and host chocolate-making birthday parties, fostering loyalty. To counter cocoa price hikes, they’ve streamlined production without compromising quality, unlike larger firms reliant on cheap cocoa. The Labor government’s lackluster response to inflation and supply chain woes hasn’t helped small businesses like Chocilo, which face regulatory burdens alongside market pressures.

Chocilo's story underscores the grit of small-scale chocolatiers. By blending tradition with adaptability, they deliver luxury in every bite, proving boutique craftsmanship can endure even a cocoa price tsunami.