

Homemade Christmas candy makes a distinctive gift

BY SALLY BAIR
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LITTLESTOWN — There is still plenty of time to present someone on your Christmas list with a homemade, lovingly prepared gift. This gift will take just a few hours of your time, and will be welcomed by young and old alike. The gift is candy — beautiful, delicious homemade candy.

Sarah Musselman is convinced that anyone can make beautiful, professional-looking candy to delight the most discriminating gift receiver.

Sarah, 1825 Whitehall Road, Littlestown, has been making professional looking cakes for nearly 20 years, but it is only recently that she began to make candy.

Operator of Musselman's Kountry Store and Cake Shoppe, Inc., Sarah also gives candy making classes. Sarah recalls that two years ago her husband became concerned with being laid off at his work and suggested that they open a bulk food store. She agreed that would be a good idea, but added, "Let's try candy too." She said the bulk food idea came about because an Amish neighbor from whom she had purchased bulk items had gone out of business.

Sarah's interest in making her own candy grew out of wanting to improve her cake decorating techniques. "I had taught myself cake decorating but there were things I didn't know how to do," she says. She searched until she found someone who taught a class,

and while there, she decided to take candy making. Sarah recalls, "My mouth was open when we made chocolate covered cherries — I'd always wondered how you made them."

After that Sarah was hooked. "I kept getting more and more into it. There is so much you can do — it is fascinating."

Customers are now benefitting from Sarah's interest, and her store is a veritable wonderland for anyone interested in making candy. Sarah carries over 250 kinds of candy molds as well as all the accessories which make the difference between amateur and professional looking candy. She has lovely gift boxes, papers, sticks for lollipops, and every kind of ingredient.

The molds cover every imaginable holiday including Christmas, Easter and Valentine's Day and less celebrated holidays like Mother's Day and St. Patrick's Day.

But it's the candy making classes which Sarah really enjoys. "Offering classes gives me an exposure, and it's fun. I enjoy teaching people to do something I do so they can have fun like I do. It really makes people feel good to say, 'I made it.'"

She charges a "refundable dollar" for the classes, and seems apologetic when she explains that she charges \$3 for hard candy classes. She gives \$2 back and lets them keep the candy they make.

Sarah rarely advertises, saying, "Word of mouth is the best ad-



Sarah waits on a customer, weighing bulk ingredients and gathering the wide variety of ingredients which will be used for holiday candy making.

vertisement." When someone expresses an interest in one of her classes, she simply takes that person's number and when she has enough to make up a class she arranges a time convenient to everyone interested. The classes themselves are conducted in the kitchen of her spacious home. They gather around the kitchen table specially built with a Corning top to allow hot peanut brittle to be poured directly on it for working.

She said she enjoys getting her customers involved in something which doesn't take a lot of money. She said she also tries to teach them all of the old tricks she knows along with some new things to keep getting the former customers back.

While it's time consuming to go to candy classes herself, Sarah still feels it is beneficial because she always learns something she can pass on to her customers. "It helps me teach. Everytime I go to a class taught by a different person, I learn something new." All of this is very helpful because customers will often call her for advice, frequently when they are in the middle of making candy and something isn't going right.

Sarah draws customers from all over Adams County, and many from nearby Carroll County, Md.

Making candy is the fun part of the business, and Sarah takes orders for her now-famous molded candy. She occasionally sells the finished product from the store, but much prefers selling it by order.

Candy making has become a family affair, with Sarah's mother, Helen Sweitzer of Silver Run, helping nearly every day in the busy season. Helen confides, though, that while she enjoys

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Helen Sweitzer, Silver Run, works on the candy sealing machine, preparing chocolate lollipops which will make interesting Christmas treats.

Homestead Notes



This chocolate sleigh is just one example of the many interesting creations Sarah Musselman can make from candy.



Sarah carefully chooses candy to fill a pound box of assorted chocolates, an attractive, delicious gift for anyone on your gift list.



What could be more welcome than a chocolate Santa on a stick? There are also molds for stockings, reindeer, bells and many other holiday treats.