

Candy Business Makes Easter A Sweet Occasion

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EAST PETERSBURG (Lancaster Co.) — Those creamy chocolate-covered peanut butter and coconut eggs taste so yummy, but are so messy to make. At least for most cooks.

But not for Brenda Garber. For weeks, Brenda has been mixing up 250 to 300 dozen pieces of the candy in her East Petersburg home.

Her kitchen is immaculate and the process well organized.

"Other people might not mind working in a mess," she said. "But I can't."

Easy and neat

As she forms the egg-shaped candy, melts the chocolate and coats the eggs, the procedure looks so easy and neat.

"I could do this all day," Brenda said as she took a fork, dipped peanut butter eggs into the melted chocolate, and placed the coated eggs on deli paper to cool.

Weeks before Christmas and Easter holidays, Brenda makes candy almost all day long, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

"It's really an overgrown hobby," Brenda said. "About 15 years ago, I helped the fire company and the youth group make candy for fund-raisers."

Make candy

After many years of fund-raising experience, Brenda offered to make candy in her own home. Word-of-mouth advertising told of the delicious candy and orders came in.

Most of the candy is sold through S. Clyde Weaver's Meats at their nearby retail store and market stands and at Minnich's Farm Market, Lititz.

"At this point, we're not interested in expanding more until the children are older," Brenda said.

The children, Richard, 6 and Michelle, 9, stay home for school and are taught by their mother. Both mother and children believe working and schooling together are ideal. During the Easter and Christmas season, the children help with the candy making. They go to school year-around because studies show that children taught at home retain more.

Push children

"We don't push the children to help with the candy making

because that would defeat the purpose," Brenda said. "But the children enjoy helping."

Brenda, who was raised by parents Stanley and Myrtle White on a Manheim farm, said that it was a big adjustment for her to move off the farm.

"If you live in a development, there isn't enough for children to do. We wanted to give our children a sense of responsibility.

"We feel like the Lord has led us into making candy. It allows me to spend time with the children. It teaches them to handle money and work with customers."

Children paid

The children get paid for the amount of candy they complete. They use the money for educational tapes and other items agreed upon by the family.

Dressed in aprons, the children industriously help their mother roll the candy eggs.

Richard said, "My eye is itchy, but I can't itch when I'm making candy."

The candy making starts with Glenn mixing batches of dough and using an industrial-size mechanic cookie cutter that shoots out dough in cookie-sized shapes. The shapes are just the right size for rolling into egg-shaped peanut butter and coconut eggs. It is this part that the children help their mother the most. Later, she dips the eggs in the melted chocolate and places them on deli paper sheets to dry.

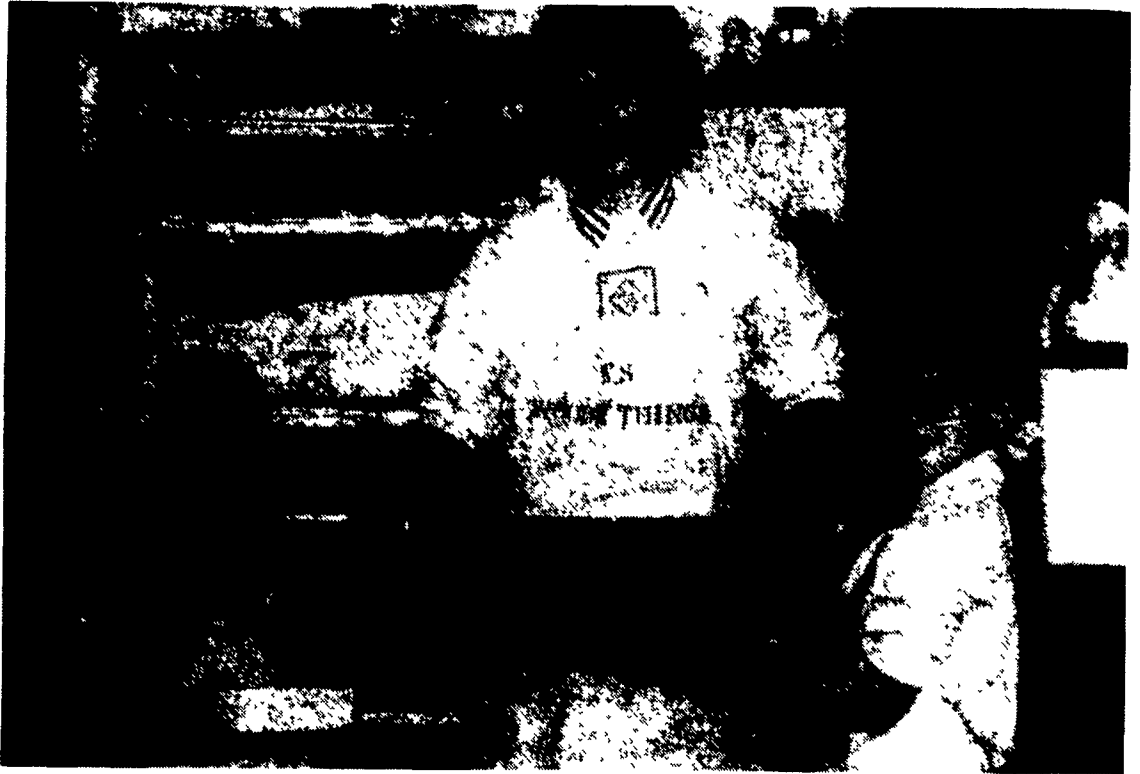
Candy packed

When cool, the candy is packed into cardboard boxes that have been folded by the children.

Michelle prefers to roll the dough into egg shapes, but her brother prefers to box the candy. He's just learning to coat the candy.

In addition to peanut butter eggs, the family makes opera fudge in vanilla, coffee, and peanut butter flavors. The opera fudge recipe comes from her aunt, Naomi Gingrich, Lebanon.

Although Brenda does not want to give away her secret candy recipes, she will share one of her specialties that she makes for families and friends.



The Garber family has been working hard to make Easter candy for others to enjoy. From left: Richard, Brenda, and Michelle.



Candy making is a family project enjoyed by (from left) Richard, Brenda, and Michelle.

BRENDA'S CREME DE MENTHE PATTIES

½ pound butter
 6 tablespoons creme de menthe non-alcoholic syrup

¼ cup hot tap water
 8 cups confectioners' sugar
 1 to 1½ pounds coating chocolate, light or dark

Mix ingredients with electric mixer. Pinch off pieces and shape into one-inch balls. Place on waxed paper-covered cookie sheets and flatten patties with a fork. Allow to dry.

Melt coating chocolate in microwave oven on low heat. Stir occasionally until melted.

Dip one patty at a time into the chocolate and carefully place on wax paper or cake rack to cool completely. Store in airtight tins. Makes about 11 dozen two-bite patties.



Nine-year-old Michelle practices her typing.



Six-year-old Richard samples a chocolate-covered coconut egg that he has helped make.

If you've got kids at home, chances are your budget is tight. Count on eggs to provide your children with high-quality protein at low cost. One egg equals one ounce of lean meat, fish or poultry. When Large eggs sell for 90

cents per dozen, it's the equivalent of only 60 cents per pound. That makes eggs one of the best buys around. Serve two eggs as a main dish or use them to stretch more expensive protein foods.

