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Last Updated: 5:04 am | Saturday, August 5, 2006

Many people tempted by Aunt Jenny's Candies

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

BURLINGTON - Aunt Jenny's Candies ships sweets across the country from the basement of a Burlington home.

"For some reason we are very popular in California," Aunt Jenny said.

The company's namesake, 35-year-old Jennifer Linkugel, and partner Melissa Pennington began their candy company in 2001 with a few family recipes and a Web site. Now the women ship candies across the U.S. and have become a homecoming gift basket staple of real estate agents and builders.

ADVERTISEMENT "I also use them as closing gifts for the customer. It's a basket shaped like a house so it's really cute," said Kellie Bailey, new-home sales counselor with Ryland Homes.

"They do all the packaging and make it really easy, plus everybody loves it. I visit offices every couple weeks and deliver those as a gift and they look for the candy lady - that's what they call me," she said.

Aunt Jenny's Candies sells caramels, cashew clusters and chocolate suckers and can arrange them all in gift baskets or party trays. Prices range from \$5 to \$45.

The women play to their strengths and have enlisted help from family, friends and neighbors.

"It has become understood that I am not to touch the fudge, as I've not mastered the art," said Linkugel. "And Melissa stays away from the chocolate suckers - she doesn't have the patience for the fine details."

Linkugel's brother Jeff set up the first Web site on a Thanksgiving vacation in 2001. During the holidays, family and friends help fill the increased orders.

For quality control, they have no problem finding help.

"We use our friends and family as taste-testers. You wouldn't believe the long list of people that have volunteered to be on that list," Pennington said. "Our next-door neighbor will actually run over any time of day or night - even in her pajamas - to taste a new candy."

Aunt Jenny's candies are made individually by hand, using no



ZOOM The Enquirer/ Ernest Coleman

Jennifer Linkugel (left) and Melissa Pennington of Burlington hold some of the Aunt Jenny's Candies they make and sell from home. Their products have become a hit with real estate agents.



ZOOM Melissa Pennington works on making chocolate-covered buckeyes.

preservatives.

"Our two most popular items are our chocolate pecan turtles and our pretzel treats. We're convinced that it has something to do with the salty and sweet combination, but we cannot keep enough of either one of these items on hand," Linkugel said.

The most overlooked items, according to Pennington, are the chocolate-covered cherries.

"They are the liquid kind that are so hard to come by. You can't just bite into them because the juicy insides will run down your chin and ruin your shirt if you aren't careful. You have to just pop the whole thing into your mouth," Pennington said.

For Aunt Jenny, marshmallow crèmes make her list.

"It's a creamy, gooey center that melts in your mouth," Linkugel said.

For more information, visit www.auntjennyscandies.com.



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