



Photo credit: Benjamin Spray

Momma Reiner's Fudge, www.mommareiner.com



Architectural Digest-worthy home on a quiet, tree-lined street tucked away in Pacific Palisades. Inside, her gourmet kitchen is flooded with light from windows overlooking the backyard and fully-equipped playground. The frilly, fragile platter on which her great aunt once served fudge sits squarely on the breakfast table, brimming with samples. It's hard to imagine this tranquil scene as the home base of a fudge mogul-in-the-making.

Although she manages to keep a trim figure by limiting her sampling, she quips that when the line expands to include caramel products she may face more of a challenge to restrain herself. This year's game plan calls for the launch of a full marshmallow line in a variety of flavors and the enhancement of the holiday assortments and high-end

gift line. "We're going through a huge growth spurt," says Kimberly, ticking off the steps she makes on her way to "becoming a real company." She has taken on a partner, added employees and hired a consultant. A publicist? No, not yet. Kimberly believes word-of-mouth is the strongest marketing tool.

While responsibilities of production at the factory and appearances at a variety of food trade shows occupy a significant amount of Reiner's time, she concedes that maintaining a balance with family life is a constant juggle. "But, I'm a mother and wife first," she explains. As the clock struck 3:45 p.m., she grabbed her car keys and, removing a skateboard one of the boys had left in the driveway, raced to carpool the kids home from school. On days like this, the fudge must cool.



Photo credit: Benjamin Spray

Sweet Success

For Kimberly Reiner, business success started at home in a little kitchen on a little street in a little village by the sea, reports **LAURA DODD**

Stir, sample, smile – all three were simple tasks for Kimberly Reiner as a youngster assisting her mom with the family's annual fudge-making ritual in their Beverly Hills home. That memory still resonates, now Kimberly has built a company around the homespun tradition.

Momma Reiner's Fudge follows her mother's recipe that, in turn, was handed down by a great aunt. But Kimberly's tasks are vastly different from her mother's as she deals with the demands of a growing fudge empire and a home life revolving around two sons, 4 and 7, and her investment broker husband.

With a law degree from Pepperdine University, she used to practice immigration law and moved back to Los Angeles from Texas, where she was working with her husband and raising her first-born. Despite a growing family, she found herself with too much free time, which she began to fill with a pastime she knew and loved best: making fudge.

"The instinct kicked in," Kimberly remembers. When she reprised the fudge-making holiday tradition in her Pacific Palisades home with her two children – the lucky ones licking the spoon this time – she only intended to package the fudge as a holiday gift

for neighbors and friends. But word spread and demand accelerated, so she agreed to sell her fudge in a friend's neighborhood stationary store and to supply the Renaissance Hotel in Los Angeles with gifts for guests. Last year, her fudge gained national attention, when it was featured as one of Oprah's favorites in "O" magazine, with its maker also appearing on the Martha Stewart show.

To keep up with demand, Reiner moved operations to a commercial kitchen in Burbank. The fudge products – kosher, preservative free and with zero trans fat – include half-dollar size dollops and fudge-

dipped marshmallows, along with special seasonal confections. Vibrant pink labels customize Chinese boxes and old-fashioned round tins, varying in price from \$3 to \$48, depending on weight. The goodies are available online (www.mommareiner.com), in local gourmet grocery stores and in shops as far away as Cape Cod.

Despite Momma Reiner's national exposure, part of her strategy entails keeping intact the childhood innocence at the core of her product. Such commitment shines through in her slogan: "Homemade in a little kitchen on a little street in a little village by the sea." She lives in an



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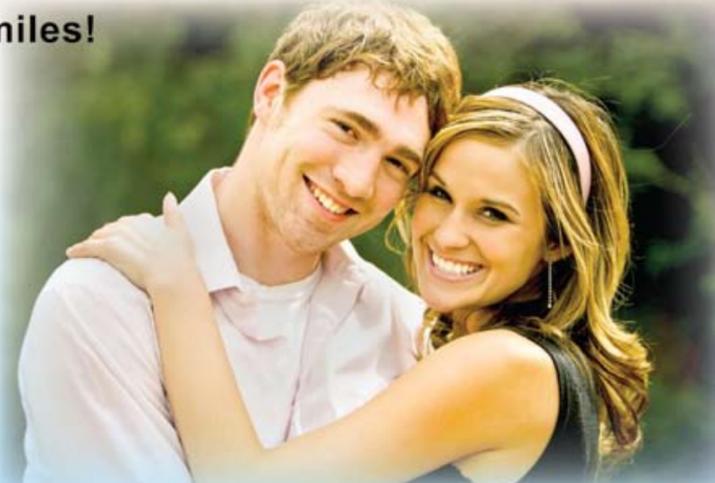
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