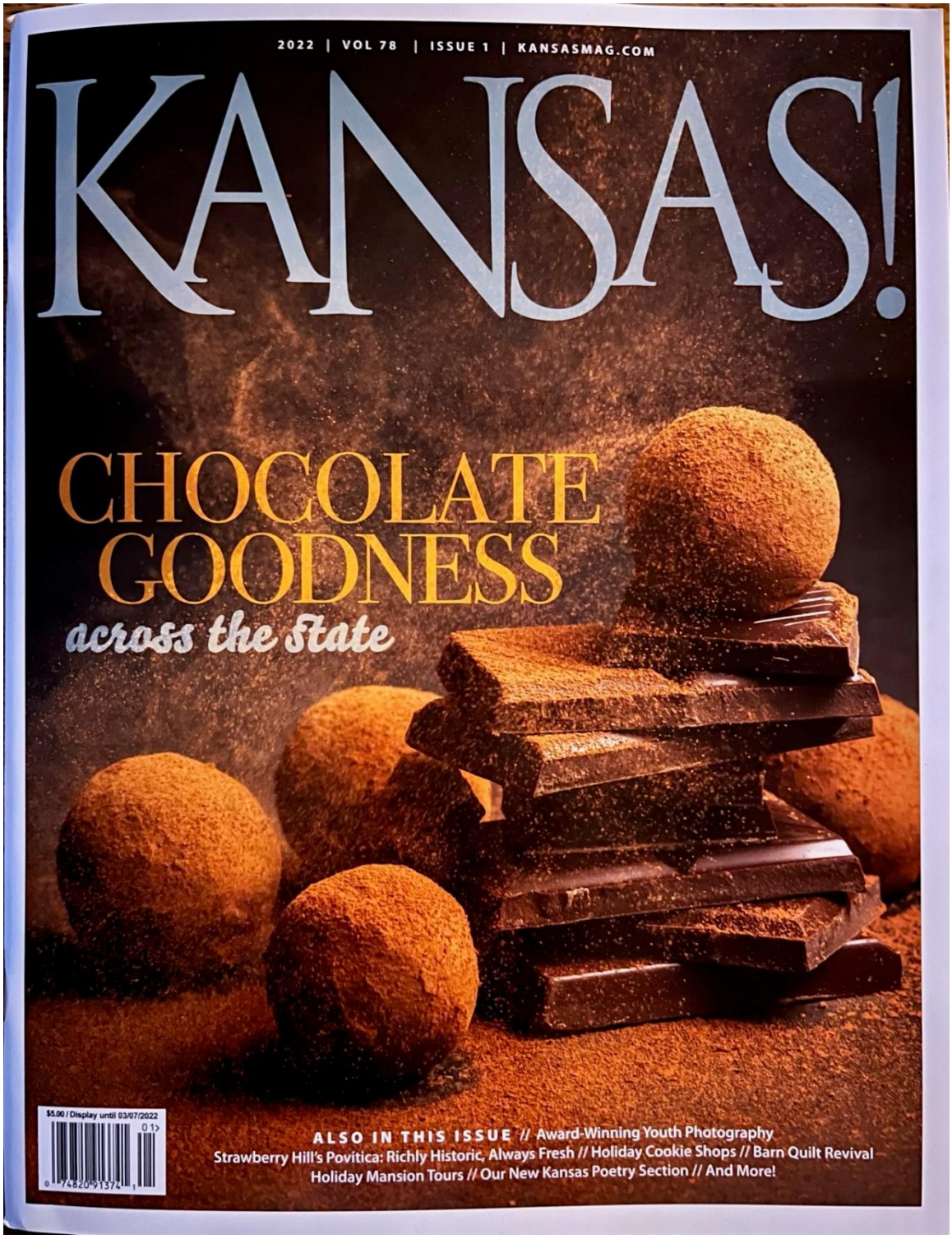
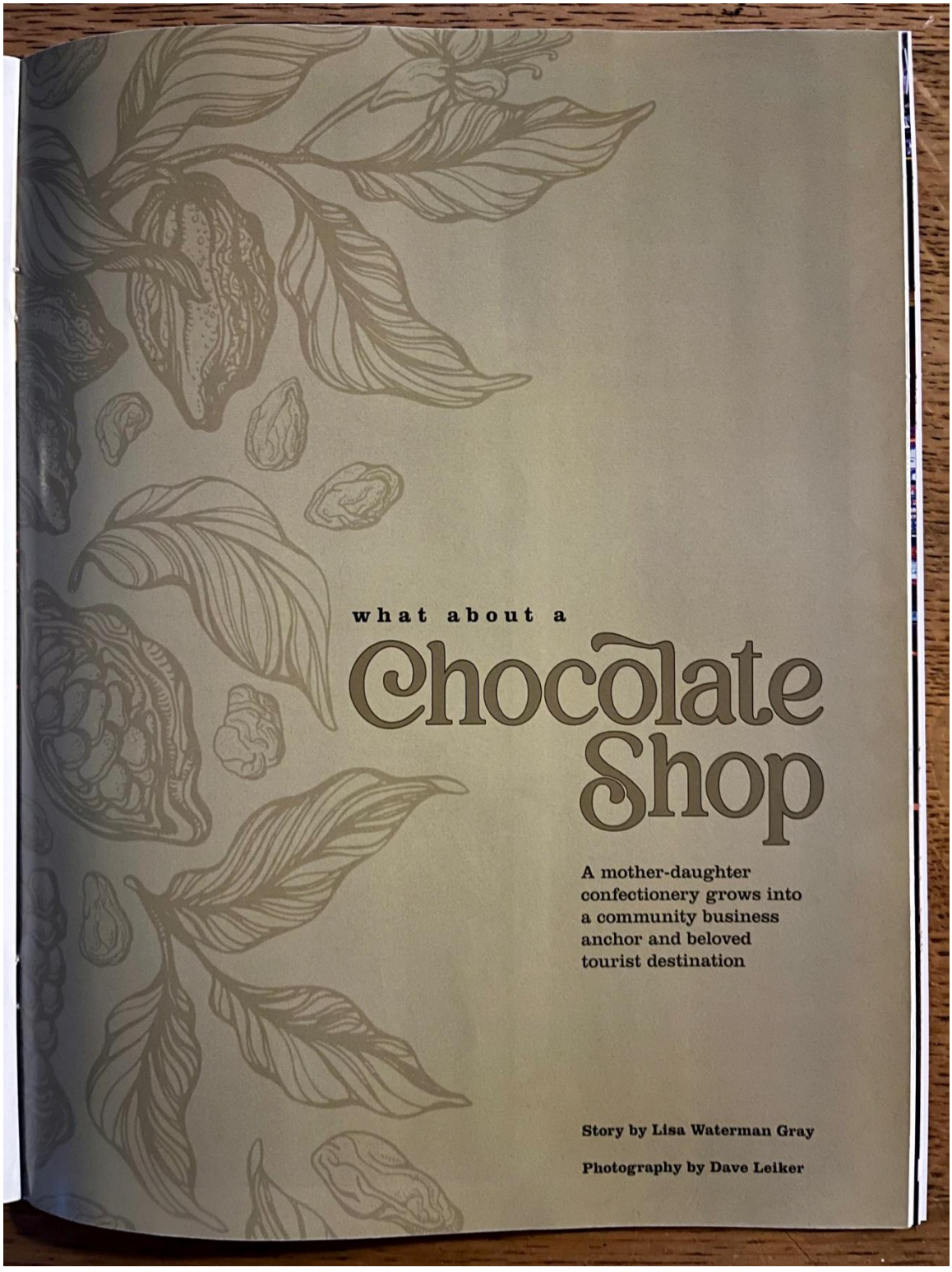
, I


2022 | VOL 78 | ISSUE 1 | KANSASMAG.COM
KANSAS!
CHOCOLATE GOODNESS
across the State
$5.00 / Display until 03/07/2022
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE // Award-Winning Youth Photography
Strawberry Hill's Povitica: Richly Historic, Always Fresh // Holiday Cookie Shops // Barn Quilt Revival
Holiday Mansion Tours // Our New Kansas Poetry Section // And More!

, I


what about a
Chocolate Shop
A mother-daughter confectionery grows into a community business anchor and beloved tourist destination
Story by Lisa Waterman Gray
Photography by Dave Leiker

, I

It's been 17 years since The Sweet Granada opened in the south storefront of Emporia's fully restored Spanish Colonial Revival-style Emporia Granada Theatre. With a tag line of "Sugar Highs & Smiles Since 2004," this family-owned business has enjoyed a sweet ride ever since.

"My mom [Toni Bowling] was retiring from education, and we knew that we wanted to start a business together," says co-owner, Kim Redeker. "I had fallen in love with the idea of revitalizing Emporia's downtown arts and entertainment district, with the Granada as its centerpiece. Mom and I literally looked at the tiny little storefront in the theater's south section, and she said, 'What about a chocolate shop?' We fell in love with the concept."

Learning to make professional-grade chocolates required Bowling and Redeker to devote months to studying and perfecting recipes before their formal opening. "We bought a little chocolate tempering machine, and we set it up in my mom's kitchen during the first year," Redeker says. "And all of our friends were our guinea pigs. Mom spent about three days working with a great chocolate maker and mentor out of the Lawrence area, and our trade association, Retail Confectioners International, has helped too."

Testing new recipes continues nearly two decades later, but now the new confections go through a tried-and-true process from the shop's in-house kitchen. Throughout the year, Redeker and her team gather new ideas among themselves and from customers and online comments. "Our production manager and lead candymaker keeps a running list taped inside one of our cupboards," Redeker says. "After Easter, we put up all the ideas on a large board, and our whole staff participates as we select from 6 to 15 flavors that we will test-run for a three-month period. Some of them make it to the cases; others don't."

, I

A pistachio-fudge combination was one of those surprise washouts. "It's my favorite flop," Redeker explains. "Pistachio pairs so well with a lot of things, but we decided that fudge is not one of them."

Other trial tastes become favorites. Cappuccino crunch, which Redekar describes as "a hit from the get-go" is now in regular production. Another new chocolate that is about to debut from the 2021 taste tests is a chocolate truffle featuring beer infusions from Walnut River Brewing Company of El Dorado.

And then there are new chocolates that reflect changing tastes since the chocolatier first opened.

"One that is doing really well is our vegan truffle; it's a dramatically dark, dairy-free truffle," Redeker says. "Consumer choices have changed, and there is a heightened awareness of allergy concerns and dietary choices since we first began. We are very mindful of how we prepare chocolates and how we work in the back of our shop."

Visitors to Sweet Granada can watch the preparation through storefront windows that open into the kitchen. Since 2013, the shop has been located one door south from its original location—now next door to the Granada rather than inside of it—and its staff has grown to include 18 people, including 2–3 full-time candy makers, a baker, interns, and part-time student staffers. In addition, several additional family members have helped with store design, bookkeeping, retail sales and more.

, I

Redeker says owning her storefront in downtown Emporia is part of her commitment to the community, and it's part of the benefit she receives from a revitalized shopping and arts district.

"I remember in 2013 or 2014, standing outside my shop with an out-of-town guest and looking around at all the renovation around us. Just rattling it off from just what was in my line of sight, I came up with 7 million dollars reinvested in our community," Redeker says. "That's a huge commitment and investment, both private and public, that really had an impact for our downtown revitalization, and I am really proud to be a part of that," Redeker says. "The stronger we are as a business district with unique destinations, the more impact we have in providing visitors and tourism dollars to our community. This benefits not only business owners, but helps improve the city in general, the lifestyle and services we are able to provide for the people who live here; it's a true win-win." **KM**

The Sweet Granada

803 Commercial St.
Emporia
(620) 342-9600
sweetgranada.com

Online orders include free shipping for orders over $100; orders should be placed by December 10 to help ensure domestic deliveries by December 25.

Toni Bowling (left) and Kim Redeker began The Sweet Granada as a mother-daughter business.

, I

Cocoa Dolce Artisan Chocolates
Wichita

Opened in 2005, and acquired by the Voegeli family of Wichita in 2015, Cocoa Dolce now operates three Wichita chocolate lounges. Their main lounge on St. Francis Street includes their production line, which can be viewed through large glass windows.

Each week, 13 chocolate makers and pastry chefs produce 5,000–10,000 chocolate pieces (and three times that amount during holiday season). Belgian chocolate and ganache are the foundations of Cocoa Dolce chocolates. Their confections include a range of products such as a rum and Coke cordial, gianduia-flavored bonbons and an Earl Grey tea confection with vanilla and white ganache. For the holidays, Cocoa Dolce will roll out products featuring caramel apple cider, pumpkin spice and mint.

Amber Travis, director of operations, says that Cocoa Dolce will be offering more themed gift boxes for the coming year.

"We have noticed a lot of people like these themed gift sets. So, while we allow people to customize their own gift boxes, we are also looking to create more confection boxes with themes such as 'coffee and chocolate,' 'nutty,' or 'pairs well with red wine.'"

Travis says their chocolates are best consumed no more than five weeks after production, so she advises ordering gifts with the expiration date in mind: by the first week of December for Christmas deliveries and not too long after February 1 for Valentine's Day arrivals.

cocoadolce.com
(316) 315-0508

Panache Chocolatier
Leawood

After operating for decades from the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri, Panache Chocolatier relocated to Leawood's Park Place in November 2019, with a celebratory post-lockdown reopening in July 2021.

During that first year in Kansas, Panache brought home a host of awards from the 2021 International Chocolate Salon, including the highest-category Grand Master Chocolatier designation (one of only four chocolatiers in the United States to achieve this ranking). Panache's Caramel Macchiato Hazelnut Bar received silver as Best Flavored Chocolate Bar, and Bronze, as Best Chocolate Bar. Honorable mentions recognized its ingredient combination, taste, and texture. In addition, the Sweet Spiced Nut Bar won gold for taste and texture among Top Spicy Chocolate Awards 2021, plus silver for Best Dark Chocolate and Most Unique.

"We keep our pulse on what is going on in the food trends, but some of the things we do are inspired by favorite childhood recipes and experiences," says owner and lead chocolatier Julie House. "I did a honeysuckle entry for the white chocolate competition because honeysuckle is something I remember as a child, running through the fields and stopping at the honeysuckle bush and taking out the nectar. That is what I wanted to recreate with that truffle."

Sweet ideas also spring from local inspiration and collaboration. A recent lavender-bourbon truffle was inspired by a candle scent being sold by a vendor at the Park Place Farmers' Market. Panache also partners with local businesses to create customized truffles, such as a classic cocktail flavor with infusions from Union Horse Distilling Co. out of Lenexa. For the 2021 holiday season, Panache is partnering with Kansas City Ballet to create a *Nutcracker*-themed holiday gift box inspired by The Land of Sweets dances in the ballet's second act.

Other favorites, such as their regular line of truffles, caramels and chocolate chunk popcorn are also available for holiday orders. House advises that Christmas orders should be placed by the first week of December. Valentine's Day orders should also be placed at least two weeks in advance for domestic shipping.

chocolatekc.com | (816) 931-3191

Other Kansas Chocolatiers

Annedore's Fine Chocolates
Westwood Hills
annedores.com
(913) 831-0302

Hazel Hill Chocolate
Topeka
hazelhillchocolate.com
(785) 215-8883

Henry's Candy Co.
Dexter
facebook.com/henryscandies
(620) 876-5423

Laura Little's Candies
Prairie Village
lauralittlecandy.com
(913) 722-2226

Maps Coffee & Chocolate
Lenexa
mapscoffee.com
(913) 281-6508

Russell Stover Chocolates
Abilene
Russellstover.com
(785) 263-0463