

A Sweet (Tooth) SUCCESS

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Photos Courtesy Of: Victoria Ashworth



Some family traditions are worth remembering, and some are even worth sharing – especially ones with chocolate. You may have memories of that one aunt who makes the family favorite holiday candy. What if you didn't have to slave away for hours in the kitchen to enjoy gourmet Texas-made holiday treats like the ones your aunt used to make? Well the time has come to break out the checkbooks, throw down some cash and prepare for some serious sweet tooth gratification! But, before you place orders let's get to know someone right here in East Texas who makes some of the best candy known to man – chocolate covered pecan toffee, to be exact.

Texas Moon Gourmet Toffee Company has been a tremendous success since its debut at Mistletoe and Magic in the fall of 1999. Owner Victoria Ashworth (marketing director at Good Shepherd in Longview) has been enjoying toffee since she was a child. "I'm not a great cook, but I can make this because I made it with my mom," Ashworth said. "I didn't just learn from a recipe; it's all in the family technique." Her mother's recipe was prepared each year as gifts for family friends and always received rave reviews. A native of Jacksonville, Texas, Victoria learned at an early age how to market products and, more importantly, how to market a product that people love.

After attending Texas A&M with a focus in marketing, Victoria always knew that she had an entrepreneurial spirit, "I always wanted my own thing." Ashworth decided to start making her



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family's delicious toffee as a side business. Volumes of research went into making the candy in large batches and packaging it in a wide range of sizes. Then came her iconic name: Texas Moon. Since her family was so close-knit, Victoria's grandmother was always a huge inspiration to her. So the company was named after her grandmother's family, the Moons, as a way to commemorate and show honor to her. Victoria's beloved grandmother was born and raised in Arkansas and was the only one of her seven siblings who moved to Texas. Therefore, she really was the "Texas Moon."

Year after year, the toffee flies off of the shelves and is shipped to consumers worldwide through their online store, txmoon.com. In 2002, Ashworth left her full-time marketing job at Trinity Mother Frances Hospital in Tyler to make toffee a full-time venture. One year later she married her husband, Jerry, and after the birth of her daughter Victoria put the toffee business on hold to focus on her growing family. With her husband's support the entire Ashworth family (including her son Ben and her daughter Katherine) picked up the toffee business again together. "Everybody in the family pitches in and helps package the toffee and fill orders. I couldn't do it without them... I'm really not a 'salesperson,'" Ashworth said. "The candy is so good, it literally sells itself. All they have to do is taste it and then they can't leave without buying some." And with such a devout following for her toffee, this holiday season marks

Texas Moon Gourmet Toffee's 14 anniversary.

Her own children along with her nieces and nephews all keep her family's personal toffee inventory relatively low. They say, "I don't eat candy with nuts in it, except yours Aunt V, because it's good!" Victoria's personal friend and avid fan of Texas Moon, Pam Gabriel of the Sweet Gourmet in Tyler, raves about how amazing Texas Moon toffee is and what an attribute the toffee is to her store. "Not having [Ashworth's] candy in my store, would be like not having a stocking on Christmas morning!"

And yes, ladies and gentleman, Victoria will be selling toffee at this year's Mistletoe & Magic event in Tyler on November 7-9. However, it's only while supplies last because close to Christmas she has been known to run out of her delicious candy.

If you want to help your kids study for finals, this would be a great gift. Ashworth said, "My candy will definitely get the creative juices flowing. My mother once said, 'I can call three out of my four kids at 3:30 in the morning and they'd all be working!'" This hard work and dedication is something her fans and their sweet teeth can be thankful for. Texas Moon Gourmet Toffee is more than a delicious candy company; it is a family history of sweet success, hard work and love packaged for everyone to enjoy. Ashworth and her family have branded a piece of their heritage to share with the world. **B**

