

Thursday, July 17, 2008

Laguna Niguel shop offers a walk through candy land

Powell's Sweet Shoppe specializes in nostalgic sweets.

By **MICHAEL GIL**

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

From a fire hydrant that once decorated Disneyland's Main Street to a 1939 gas pump, **Powell's Sweet Shoppe** is filled with memorabilia that transport you to a world most people thought was long gone.

Plus, it offers more than 5,000 sweets stacked floor to ceiling.

When I heard that a new Powell's shop was opening in Orange County, I called Victoria Emry, co-owner of the new Laguna Niguel location. I asked her to tell me about the store, but she told me it was impossible to describe, I would have to come down and see it for myself.

The original Powell's, located in Windsor, opened in late 2003. After it became a success in its hometown, Michael Powell, the founder, decided to franchise. This June, 1,000 people showed up for the grand opening of the Laguna Niguel location.

Victoria and her husband, Randall Emry, are the owners of the new store. It is a Powell's requirement that each store be a family-owned business in the vicinity of the owner's home, to create a community feeling.

The Emrys fell in love with the original Powell's Sweet Shoppe when they found it near a relative's '50's diner. They worked with their whole family to open and run their own store.

When I got to the store, Victoria showed me around. Our first stop was the Wonka wall. The original store was inspired by the 1971 film, "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," and each store has a tribute to the candy-themed classic. Next we saw the Nostalgia Table, which holds the many varieties of retro favorites carried by the store, from Abba Zabba to moonpies to candy cigarettes.

Then we walked through the England section, the lollipop section, the licorice section, the mint section and the gum section. For those with a craving for chocolate, the International chocolate section offers items originating from Belgium to Colombia and everywhere in between. More specialty chocolates are kept in a glass case by the register.

Powell's also offers gelato and, to wash down all that candy, a lot of soda. "We have just about every soda you can carry that hasn't been banned by the FDA," Victoria Emry explained. From Sarsaparilla, to cream soda, to root bear, they have it all. They also sell retro toys and games.

The sweets range in price from 10 cents for the cheapest candy items to \$20 for some of the specialty products.

Though the store already offers thousands of products, they still add more when they get requests. "At least once a week we get stumped by a candy request," Victoria Emry said.

A party room is also available for birthdays and other children's celebrations. The floor of the room is a giant game board and there is a giant set of dice to match. Candy trivia cards are also involved with questions such as this one: True or false, marshmallows derive their name from an ingredient found in marshes. (It is true, by the way.)

Victoria Emry and her family have transformed every aspect of the shop to complete the old-time experience. The walls are adorned with candy- and period-themed memorabilia and family photos. Candy-themed music plays in the background.

"I remember this!" and "Hey, check this out!" are common statements Victoria Emry hears when people walk through the door.

"Adults are enjoying sharing memories with their children," she said.

One of those parents is Tiffany Thompson, who brought her daughter to the store. "It's amazing!" she said, "It's cool because it's one of a kind and none of the kids have been to a true candy shop."

Her daughter, Jessica, 13, had a similar sentiment: "It's the best store in the world."

Powell's Sweet Shoppe is at 27000 Alicia Parkway, Suite E, Laguna Niguel 92677. Phone: (949)-831-9652.

Laguna Niguel shop offers a walk through candy land

REMEMBER THIS MOM! An excited Marilyn Burger shows Wacky Packages to her mom. The trading cards series features parodies of American consumer products usually in a sticker format. This is the Aliso Viejo resident's fourth trip to the candy store.

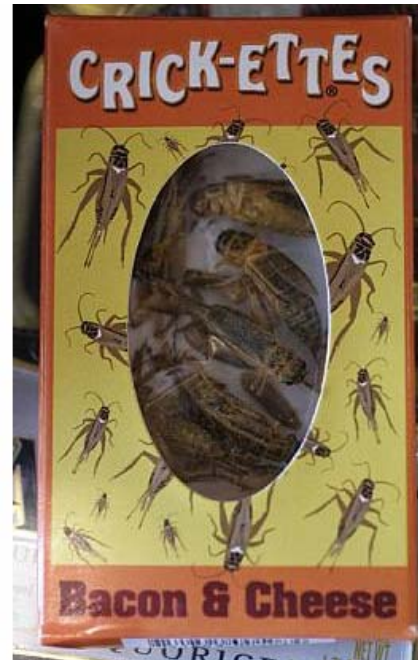
CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



Laguna Niguel shop offers a walk through candy land

WILLY WONKA
INSPIRED: If you want to catch Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, you can in comfort at Powell's Sweet Shoppe in Laguna Niguel. The movie plays all day long near cushy red velvet theatre seats.

CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



Laguna Niguel shop offers a walk through candy land
HUNGRY?: If you're not in the mood for the 5,000 plus sweets offered at Powell's Sweet Shoppe then try these Bacon & Cheese Crick-ettes.

CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Laguna Niguel shop offers a walk through candy land

GOT GUM?: A variety of gum flavors and sayings are in this card catalog at Powell's Sweet Shoppe in Laguna Niguel.

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER, CINDY YAMANAKA,



Laguna Niguel shop offers a walk through candy land

ALL IN THE FAMILY: The Emry family, from left: Victoria, her son Cody and mother-in-law Joanne relax in the Powell's Sweet Shoppe party room. It is a Powell requirement that each store be family-owned and near the owner's home to create a community feeling.

CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



Laguna Niguel shop offers a walk through candy land

PURE IMAGINATION: Victoria Emry of Mission Viejo is not a fairy princess, just the owner of Powell's Sweet Shoppe in Laguna Niguel. Princess hats, candy bar pillows, a Disneyland fire hydrant and a gas pump are some of the surprises that await sweet goers.

CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



Laguna Niguel shop offers a walk through candy land

CANDY AND THE KING TOO: Powell's Sweet Shoppe in Laguna Niguel has something for young and old alike. Elvis, Willy Wonka and even pinatas are available at the shop that stocks over 5,000 sweet treats.

CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



Laguna Niguel shop offers a walk through candy land

WONDERFUL: Elizabeth Rippee of Laguna Niguel thinks Powell's Sweet Shoppe is "wonderful." She looks at cards that highlight specific years. In June 1,000 people showed up for the grand opening of the new Laguna Niguel location.

CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

