

RUTLAND BUSINESS JOURNAL

Rutland, VT

Sales Of Seasonal Sweets Set To Soar

BY LANI DUKE

The retail candy industry is an especially strong indicator that the holidays are here.

As certain holidays approach, the volume of celebratory merchandise increases, and that's no different with candy.

"Seasonal-themed candy and novelties are a critical component of the retail complex," said Rob Auerbach, president of national sweets distributor CandyRific LLC. "The segment has grown from providing a little lift to playing a much bigger role." Seasonal products, he said, provide a big boost to sales.

Candy industry experts predict sales of seasonal candy, especially non-chocolate novelties, will continue in the strong mode candy manufacturers enjoyed in 2007. According to the National Confectioners Association, non-chocolate sales during the 2007 Valentine's Day holiday were up 7.4 percent above the previous year, while drug store candy sales were up nearly 12 percent.

In drug stores, Christmas-themed chocolate sales were up 4.6 percent, while sales of non-chocolate candy increased nearly 7 percent, according to Drug Store News.

Christmas is the occasion for the nation's third largest candy sales, preceded by Halloween and Easter, and followed by Valentine's Day. The average American spends \$84 a year on 23.9 pounds of candy.

Novelty packaging adds to visual appeal and helps to boost sales. For instance, the Mars company has created a Dove Jewel holiday ornament filled with a variety of Dove chocolate flavors.

Seasonal shapes and packaging add to eye appeal and boost sales at Something Sweet in downtown Rutland, said owner Val Malmgren. Before Thanksgiving, her shelves and bins already sported candies in Christmas shapes, flavors, and colors including caramel Santas, candy cane snowmen made of dark chocolate, mellowcreme mix formed into Christmas shapes and individual pieces wrapped to look like tiny gift packages.

Other products that sell well at Christmas time are chocolate truffles, especially the raspberry and Irish cream varieties; molded candies; and peanut butter flavored candies.