

## **Business hits sweet spot with customers**

**By Hillary Gavan hgavan@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Tuesday, March 12, 2013 4:00 pm**

Beloit's downtown will be a little sweeter thanks to Scott and Teala Lamoreux. The couple opened a candy, chocolate and popcorn shop in Beloit's downtown at 314 State St. on Valentine's Day.

Celebrating five years in business, Northwoods Premium produces hand-made candies including toffee, fudge and brittle, fine chocolates such as turtles and meltaways and a variety of gourmet popcorn including kettle corn, caramel, cheddar and specialty flavors. Many people in Beloit know Northwoods Premium as a third year vendor at the Beloit Farmers Market.

The Lamoreuxs started their gourmet food business about five years ago while running a motel they owned in Cameron, Wis. Every holiday Teala would make batches of her grandma's candy and fudge to pass out. The items were so sought after many of their friends started placing orders for them. They converted a room in their motel into a commercial kitchen to keep up with demand, and eventually distributed the Northwoods Premium chocolate and candy lines in five states.

Teala said her grandmother loved southern cooking and candies. And because she had dentures she made sure to make her brittle, toffee and popcorn balls extra soft and tender. Teala said many customers with dental work flock to Northwoods Premium because they can safely enjoy their favorite treats again.

"Our popcorn balls are from a very old fashioned recipe, tender with a little bit of chew to them," Scott said.

After the candy line was launched Scott branched into making more popcorn products. Northwoods Premium offers popcorns in sweet flavors such as cookies and cream, made with Oreo bits and white chocolate, or chocolate mint. There are also more savory products like white cheddar garlic and dill, cheddar ranch, Texas barbecue or jalapeno cheddar. The loaded baked potato flavor popcorn features kernels of smoky bacon mixed with cheddar and chives and sour cream.

"Popcorn is a good neutral flavor medium. You can do a lot of unique and interesting things with it. We like to experiment and make new flavors," Teala said.

The popcorn balls are also a big hit, made in a variety of flavors including cherry, blue raspberry and caramel, and on occasion, banana, grape or butterscotch pecan. In order to keep the product fresh they don't stock all their 40 flavors at once, but they said they try to cycle the flavors through on a regular basis.

Cooking the items by hand using family recipes, the Lamoreuxs are quite protective of their trade secrets and don't generally give tours. They are so concerned about the proper treatment of toffee, for example, they said they don't "enrobe" it in chocolate like some manufacturers do to preserve shelf life. The white and darker shades of chocolate are striped on top of Northwoods Premium toffee.

It was three years ago the Lamoreuxs decided to sell their hotel, and move their business to Loves Park to be closer to their families, and opened a 1,500-square-foot kitchen in the Loves Park area which carried their merchandise.

When not cooking the two were traveling to area farmers' markets, including Beloit. But they grew such a large following they wanted to open an highly visible storefront.

"It was the right size and the right price. We decided to move the whole operation up here," Teala said.

They said they were quickly embraced by the Beloit community, noting it reminds them of the small town friendliness and close-knit feel of the touristy towns of northern Wisconsin.

"You know everybody. The store owners know customers by name, and you have that connection with everybody. In just three weeks, we've had customers back and forth already," Teala said.

The store also carries unique candies such as little ice cream cones treats with prizes inside for kids, wax lips and mustaches and other vintage style candies. Gift boxes for special occasions are available and Northwoods Premium offers a delivery service. This spring the store also will start carrying more north woods decor and home accents.

Hours are 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. For more information call 608-363-9000 or visit their website at [www.northwoodspremium.com](http://www.northwoodspremium.com).

