

THINKING BIG

INSPIRATIONS FOR ENTREPRENEURS LARGE AND SMALL

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Smooth as chocolate

She had a recipe, he had a plan. They took it into the kitchen, are tasting success. Dessert, anyone?

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The story of Mary's Gourmet is one of romance and chocolate.

Roger Clowater and Mary Bewick met in New Brunswick on a blind date and bonded over her delectable candy.

The result was marriage and Mary's Gourmet, their Toronto home business that produces, packages and markets "flore-

ntines." That's their name for their boutique brand of florentines — wafer-sized pieces of caramelized almonds coated in Belgian dark chocolate. "It's a hybrid of a candy and a biscuit," says Clowater.

After two years spent refining the recipe and packaging, Mary's Gourmet Florentines have made the big time. Last spring, the candy was a finalist in the "best of confection" category at the Canadian Fine Food Show in Toronto.

The candy is now sold in 20 Ontario stores, including Pusateri's Fine Foods and Magnolia Fine Foods, and is used by 20 gift basket companies.

"We've positioned our product as an upscale gift item," Clowater says.

He was a Saint John, N.B., police officer when he met Bewick, a home economist then promoting Bay of Fundy salmon for the Salmon Growers Association of New Brunswick.

When Bewick moved to Toronto to work as a marketing manager at Robin Hood Multi-Foods, Clowater followed her and proposed. They were married last July. Their vows included a shared belief in a future of florentines.

Clowater, 44, describes their relationship as a "fine balance."

"I'm the entrepreneur and Mary is the realist," he says.

Bewick, 35, is an old hand at kitchen sweets. Growing up, she helped her mother run a candy store in Saint John. Later she put herself through university by operating a summer catering business. Florentines were a Bewick specialty and when they were served at social functions, guests ordered bags of them.

"They just took off," says Clowater. "Mary used to deliver them in waxed paper bags."

Now they're sold, after much research and numerous designs, in an elegant upscale cardboard

▶ Please see Candy, K6



HOW SWEET IT IS:

Roger Clowater and Mary Bewick cavort in Toronto Kitchen Incubator, the premises for rent where they produce their unique brand of florentines for the fine food market.