

■ That is nowhere more apparent than at **Daily Chocolate** in Vergennes where lemongrass-sake-ginger chocolate, cognac Black Forest fudge, or a chocolate pomegranate truffle are the order of the day. You can watch chocolatier Floery Mahoney at work in the stone-and-brick shop, tempering her own blend of high-end, single-source, imported and domestic chocolates and hand rolling them into various concoctions. The shop's white chocolate bark, flavored with lemon, lavender and almonds, is a revelation for folks who think they dislike white chocolate.

■ You can attend "Chocolate School," buy bulk chocolate for home candy-making, or indulge your palate with a range of artisan confections from **Linda Grishman Chocolates** of Burlington. Grishman, a native of South Africa, began her life as a chocolatier in New York City (where a colleague who worked as a chauffeur made her one of the few chocolatiers to deliver by limo). She has been in Vermont since 1991, winning acclaim for her chocolates, which have names like Moonlight in Vermont and Peanut Butter Pigouts. Whimsical labels notwithstanding, this is serious chocolate: her new In the Dark line of 72 percent cacao bars are a dark-chocolate-lovers delight.

■ Leigh Williams, of **Laughing Moon Chocolates** of Stowe, went into the business because she figured that there was nothing better that she could do "on a daily basis to make people happy."

"I know it sounds corny," she says. "But it's true." Her handmade chocolate truffles, specialty candies and European hot chocolate have been making folks happy since 2001.

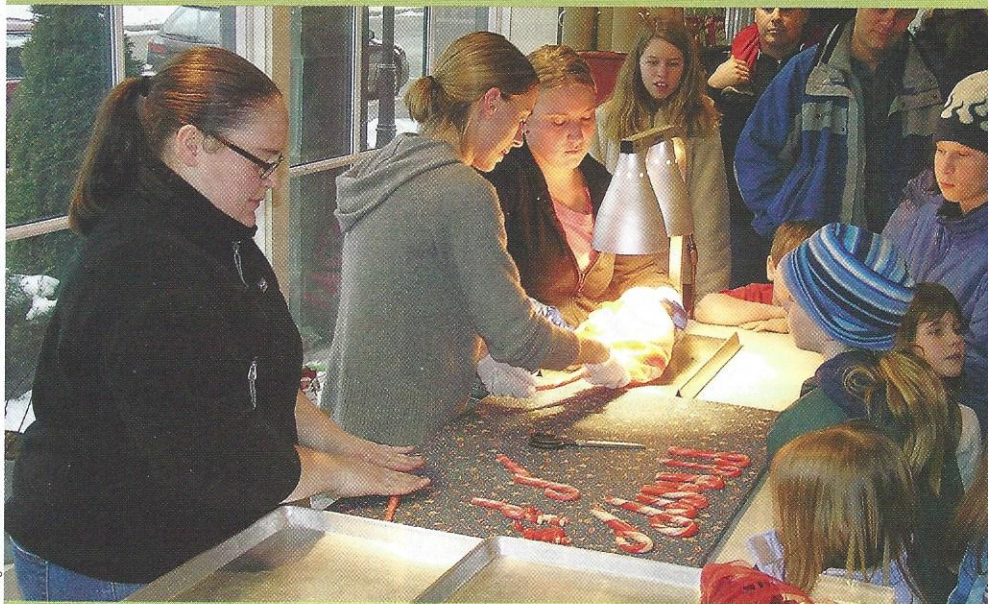
■ For sheer old-fashioned cheerfulness, **Mother Myrick's** in Manchester Center has it down. Husband-and-wife team Ron Mancini and Jacki Baker have been

The Inside Scoop: Restaurants, cookbooks and foodie events not to miss

"I want to marry the home fries and have an affair with the French toast," wrote one signer of the guest book at the Busy Bee in Glover (802) 525-9900. A ringing recommendation for new chef/owner Amanda Menard, who reopened the legendary 15-seat diner in June, after it had closed briefly after the death of former owner Edna Chamberlin, who ran the place for more than 40 years. "It's really nice," says Menard of the diner's experience in the cozy space. "You come here and you make friends."

Leigh Williams of Laughing Moon Chocolates in Stowe offers her popular, free candy-cane making classes every Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m.; Nov. 24-25, Dec. 1-2, 8-9, 15-16 and 22-23 this year at her Depot Street Shop. Space is limited, so get there early.

Nothing says ho-ho-holidays like a gingerbread house — or hockey rink, or cathedral, which are some of the past entries to the annual Gingerbread House competition held by the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury. This marks the ninth year; view submissions (there were more than 40 last year) from Nov. 30 to Dec. 22, or submit your own.



Doug Olfman

Hot off the presses and just in time for the gift-giving season is "Cooking with Shelburne Farms" (Viking, \$35) by well-respected food writer (and *Vermont Life* contributor) Melissa Pasanen and Shelburne Farms chef Rick Gencarelli. Organized by local product, this handsome volume includes chapters on milk and cheese, lamb, wild mushrooms, game, pork, apples and maple (both sweet and savory). Food photographs by Boston-based photographer Susie Cushner give the reader an extra push into the kitchen to make Shepherd's Pie with Caramelized Onion and Cheddar Smash while portraits of Vermonters like "wildcrafters" Les Hook and Nova Kim of Albany, who find and sell wild mushrooms and other edibles, immerse readers in Vermont's vibrant food culture.