

Hallway to Candy Heaven: Spoonful of Sugar in Benicia

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If you're not paying attention, you'll miss Spoonful of Sugar in Benicia, a narrow store, not much wider than a hallway, that's the best place ever for licorice and retro candies that you haven't seen since you were a little kid and for chocolates and 21 different colors of M&Ms and for finding the kinds of candies that you can't find anywhere else. It's a hallway to candy heaven, but you don't know about Spoonful of Sugar because you keep missing it.



DeeDee Reynolds, who owns Spoonful of Sugar with her husband Ed, with her three daughters, Paige, Brooklyn and Sarah

Whether you're on the west side of First Street walking up, away from the water, looking right when you should be looking left, or you're walking down towards the water, looking left when you should be looking right, you'll miss Spoonful of Sugar just as surely as tomorrow follows today, unless, that is, you're not looking out for your feet and manage to trip over the lollipop display sitting right in front of you on the sidewalk and fall flat on your face. When you look up, you'll be in front of Spoonful of Sugar.

But even if you haven't been paying attention, you've seen Spoonful of Sugar on First Street, number 623, right next to the Oz Salon and Gallery in that building with the black-tile façade. You've seen that black tile even if you've missed the Spoonful of Sugar sign. You probably walked right by it without knowing you were there because you were mesmerized by the narrow line of red tiles that cuts horizontally through the black just at your



Spoonful of Sugar in Benicia

eye level, leading your eyes along no matter whether you're a little kid who would have to look way up high to find the "Candy" sign above the Spoonful of Sugar door, or a normal kind of adult obsessing about the state of your teeth and the circumference of your waist, or someone really tall who could just as easily touch the high-up top of the Spoonful of Sugar sign with a stupendous leap as dunk a basketball without thinking twice about making the jump, even on a heavy-air, dragging-you-down kind of day, the kind of day -- like sometime today -- when you need candy the most.

Though not all agree.

No, some like my younger son, who never touches candy, will claim that fresh fruit is the way to go. And I couldn't agree more that there's nothing like a fresh peach or pear to sooth the ravaged soul.

Others will claim that when the day is getting them down there's nothing better than a little exercise with plenty of ice-cold bottled water as long as you watch out, now that we're becoming environmentally aware, of the impact that seemingly innocuous plastic bottle is having on the temperature of our air.

Certainly I agree that those who advocate exercise have it right.

Take my friend Gene, for example. He lives in Snug Harbor on the Delta, the one near Rio Vista, not that other one in New Orleans. When Gene's feeling tired driving one of those long and lonely levee roads that would just as soon bury you deep down its steep slope in slough water than get you to your destination, Gene doesn't reach for energy drinks or coffee or wonderful Spoonful of Sugar candy. No sir.

Gene pulls off the road onto a soft shoulder. Gets out of his truck. Grabs hold of the baseball bat that he always carries with him in the truck. Leans over and picks up a rock, one that's not too big, just big enough, you know. And Gene flips that rock into the air with one hand, not too high, not too low, just about right. And Gene swings that bat hard against the rock and through, spinning himself around where he stands, trying to hit that rock as far out in the fields of grapes and corn and melons as he can.

Pop, he strikes that rock off his bat. And then another and another. After all, what's one more rock, more or less, to a Delta farmer. Until Finally Gene gets his energy back, without the need of an energy drink or coffee or Spoonful of Sugar candy as he continues on his lonely levee journey.

But I'm not Gene, though I am thinking about putting a baseball bat in my trunk when driving Delta levees. Even if I'm not tired, it'd be fun knocking rocks into Delta crops when no one was coming.

No, my number-one energy solution is a bag full of Spoonful of Sugar licorice at the ready, the energy food of those who know good candy when they taste it, the sugary, peppery elixir of the gods, because Spoonful of Sugar's licorice is absolutely the best licorice you can find anywhere between here and wherever else it is you go.

Trust me. I'm an expert on this. Everyplace I go I'm looking first, before my wife and I have found a place to stay or somewhere to eat or even know where we are, for licorice. And almost always I find namby-pamby licorice that doesn't have the strength to proclaim its independence from all the other so-called candies. Worse than that, this licorice that isn't what it needs to be is so expensive that I have to think about taking out a mortgage on our house to buy a pound or two, not that anyone can get a mortgage these days.

But not at Spoonful of Sugar. The prices are reasonable, a lot less than you've experienced in the mall or at those places near the sea where a bag full of candy costs more than a full tank of gas.

"But I don't like licorice," you say.

I know, I know. The world is divided into those who like licorice -- the lucky ones -- and everyone else who claims to like chocolate and sour candies and rock candy and fruit jellies and Harry Potter disgusting worms and earwax and stuff like that. All of that and more is at Spoonful of Sugar.

But if you were me, which I know you're not, you'd go for the

licorice, more kinds than you've ever seen before. And while you're there say "Hi" to DeeDee Reynolds, who owns the store with her husband Ed. Maybe you'll see DeeDee's three lovely daughters there, ages three to nine, as well.

When DeeDee was walking around town, going to parks, trying to find interesting places to visit with her daughters, there was no place she could take her children for a piece of candy. She started Spoonful of Sugar to create exactly the place to go. In the process she has created the best place for licorice lovers and those who haven't yet acquired the taste.

Go there. Check it out. After one visit, you'll always know where to find it.

Dave Badtke, who teaches English at Solano College and Astronomy at College of Alameda, can be contacted at Dave@Badtke.com. Find his blog at Badtke.com and copies of this and older columns at QCounty.com.