

As Seen In...



*Brandini Roca*  
La Quinta, California  
www.brandiniroca.com

# Candy Kids

## A SWEET WAY TO GET TO COLLEGE

BY MICHELLE PARK PHOTO: ANDREAS KOESSLER

Their school trip to Rome this spring was financed with money earned from cups of sugar and blocks of butter mixed over heat, covered with sweet melted chocolate and sprinkled with crunchy crushed almonds.

The La Quinta High School sophomores who combine the ingredients time and time again will tell you: Like Rome, their candy business wasn't built in a day. Leah Post and Brandon Weimer, the owners of Brandini Roca, earned food-handling licenses before they earned high school diplomas and driver's licenses. Post is 15; Weimer is 16.

Best friends since they were 4-year-olds cooking cupcakes in an Easy Bake Oven, the two began the company in the fall with hopes of paying for a school trip to Italy during spring break in early April.

The cost — about \$2,200 per person — was raised quickly, thanks to “tons” of holiday sales that required nights of work, during which the teenagers — often dressed in aprons and paper chef hats — produced mega pounds of the “addictive” candy.

Now, despite a drop in sales, the well-spoken students have high hopes of partially or fully funding their college educations with the candy they make, package and sell. Pocketing some spending money wouldn't hurt either, both admit, smiling. “After all, we're high schoolers,” Post says.

### THE ADDICTIVE CONCOCTION

Brandini Roca is a hard toffee topped with a softer layer of chocolate and ground almonds. It takes Post and Weimer about an hour to make a triple batch, which yields 30 pounds of the treat.

There are four ingredients. Ask the sophomores what they are, but don't ask them how much of each they use. Those amounts are one of the few secrets they keep.

Initially, Weimer borrowed the recipe from a family friend, Doug Alvarez, a former grade school teacher who received the recipe with a batch of treats from a parent. Weimer has used the recipe for years.

“She was the first person I showed it (to),” he says of Post. Laughing, Post interjects: “He was all secretive at first.”

### MARKETING AND DIVERSIFYING

Months after they sold their first black and white box, Post and Weimer are marketing Brandini Roca to hotels and golf clubs. They also say it makes a great wedding shower and reception gift.

Recently, the two introduced a new product: Brandini Roca bits to be used in milkshakes and as ice cream topping. It's not the only new addition to the enterprise. The two proudly wear T-shirts and visors that bear their company's name, a combination of a nickname Post had for Weimer when they were little (“Brandini”) and the recipe (“almond roca”).

Brandini Roca customers include friends, relatives, at least one party planner and one high school teacher, Cheryl Schuler. The history teacher purchased \$50 worth to ship to relatives in Texas.

“The candy tastes as if it's made with the very best ingredients,” Schuler says, adding it tastes better because students make it. “These are two young people. I'm very impressed with their motivation.”

Leah Post and Brandon Weimer, owners of Brandini Roca, have found sweet success with their business venture.

### FAMILY MAKES IT WORK

The success Post and Weimer have enjoyed has earned them attention from strangers and their peers. “A lot of kids say, ‘Lucky you,’” Weimer says. “It’s not like this fell from the sky and we grabbed it.”

No, it took work.

“We’ve learned a lot of lessons,” Post says, identifying the importance of teamwork as one of them. “So many people go through life without knowing what it’s like to run a business or be at the top of a business, and we’re only 15. We took the opportunity and ran with it.”

They’ve had a lot of help. Both Post and Weimer agree: Without their parents, Brandini Roca wouldn’t exist.

Weimer’s father, Brad, is the general manager for the Indian Wells Resort Hotel where they cook their batches. His mother, Angela, has an eBay business and assists them in packaging and shipping their products.

Post’s father, Justin, works in video production and Web development. His contribution is [www.brandiniroca.com](http://www.brandiniroca.com). Her mother, Maggie, works in publicity and contacted local media about Brandini Roca.

It amazes Angela Weimer, 41, that Post and Weimer earned the entirety of the cost of their trip to Italy. “When we first started, I thought, ‘Well, they can earn a little bit of it,’” she says. “I just thought they’d get some work ethics out of it.”

How might she react if they earn enough to fund their college educations? “I’d be ecstatic,” Angela Weimer says, grinning. “It’d be like winning the lottery.”

### SWEET SUCCESS

When Post and Weimer leave for college, where both say they may study business, they intend for their 11-year-old sisters, Sarah and Brielle, also best friends, to assume the Roca reins.

Both find it easy to visualize a future for the company they’ve built. Weimer mentions a factory, workers, a scattering of shops.

The two don’t want their creation to become the next Starbucks. The sweetest success, they agree, would be if Brandini Roca created “a legacy for future Posts and Weimers.”

### BUYING BRANDINI ROCA

**Cost:** 1/4-pound bag, \$5 (minimum order of six); 1/2-pound box, \$8; 1-pound box, \$15; and 2-pound box, \$28

Purchase the product online at [www.brandiniroca.com](http://www.brandiniroca.com) or contact Leah Post at 534-1910 or Brandon Weimer at 702-5576.