

# A Traveler's Library

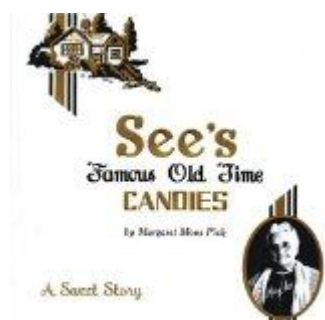
Books, Movies, and other Travel Inspirations

## Sweet Book Treat for Valentine's Day

🕒 February 9, 2012 📁 Books, California, Destinations, Food, Travel, United States 📌 BlogSherpa, California, food travel, guest post, I Love Lucy, See's candy, youtube 👤 Brette Sember

### TASTY TRAVEL

Destination: California (Candyland by book)

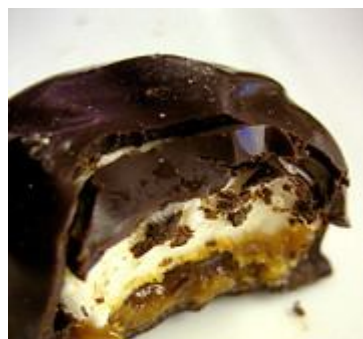


Book: *See's Famous Old Time Candies: A Sweet Story* (2005) by Margaret Moos Pick



### Review and Recipe by Brette Sember

One of my family's favorite vacation activities is to take tours of fun food production facilities. We've visited the **Jelly Belly** factory in Fairfield, CA, the **Byrd Cookie Company** in Savannah and the **Charleston Tea Plantation** (home to American Classic Tea), among many others. It's always simply fascinating to see where and how your favorite treats are made (and enjoy some samples while there!).



One food factory tour I would love to take is of **See's Candies**. We sampled See's Candies while in California and they now top my list of favorites. See's doesn't offer tours to their Los Angeles or San Francisco factories or to any of their other facilities, sadly. The next best thing is **See's Famous Old Time Candies: A Sweet Story** by Margaret Moos Pick. This little book is just as delicious as a box of candies and is a journey not only to See's locations, but through time as well.



Inside the cover you are immediately greeted with a montage of See's treats, candy for your eyes. See's is now controlled by Berkshire Hathaway and Warren Buffet wrote the preface. Diving into the book is like a trip to vintage California, something I find incredibly kitschy and fun, like an old postcard or the Hollywood sign.

I learned so much about See's that I really do feel as if I took a tour and spent some time in one of their shops, just chatting with employees. There really was a Mary See and See's still uses her candy recipes. They aren't kidding when they call them old-fashioned candies. The family photos are fantastic and offer a glimpse into what California used to be like, with flowering trees and quaint homes in the background.

See's began in L. A. in the Roaring 20's when Californians had extra income and a feeling of celebration. What better time to start selling delicious candies? One of my favorite photos in the book is of the delivery motorcycle that was used to personally deliver orders during this time period. A tiny little country cottage with white eyelet curtains was built on the back of a motorcycle with the See's name prominently displayed.



See's was off to a great start, but then the crash came. The fledging company held on with smart moves when it came to price (reducing it) and quality (never sacrificing it). By the 1940's See's quaint country cottage style shops had spread all the way to San Jose and Sacramento. The photos of these shops are simply stunning. With striped awnings, black and white floors, adorable cases, white paneled walls and salesgirls in white nurse-like uniforms with giant black bow ties, See's had created a look all its own. See's has now become a company with stores all over the world.

The book goes behind the scenes with photos of the candy-making process in its L. A. facilities. You can walk through the process and see a wide variety of machines and workers. There's even a "nut room" where nuts are assessed for quality before being shelled for candy making. One of my favorite tidbits from the book is that the famous *I Love Lucy* candy factory episode was actually filmed in See's factory in L. A. !



The pages also include fun stories about shop openings (involving a Chinese Lion Dance and firecrackers in Kowloon and a famous jazz band in San Francisco) as well as vignettes about employees and family members. I would be remiss if I didn't warn you that the book contains lots and lots of photos of amazing candies (honestly, I never even knew what a bonbon was and now I am going to have to order some from See's).

See's doesn't share any of their recipes (a crime!) so to sate your appetite for sweets, I'm share my family recipe for fudge:

### **Gai's Fudge**

1 cup milk  
2 squares unsweetened baking chocolate  
3 cups sugar  
1 teaspoon light corn syrup  
Dash of salt  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
½ cup chopped pecans or walnuts

Warm the milk over low heat and add the chocolate, stirring until it is melted and smooth. Stir in sugar, corn syrup and salt. Cook over low to medium heat until it reaches 236 degrees (soft ball stage). Remove from the heat and stir in butter. Cool, stirring until it is lukewarm. Stir in the vanilla and the nuts. Pour into an 8x8 buttered pan and cool completely, then cut into squares.

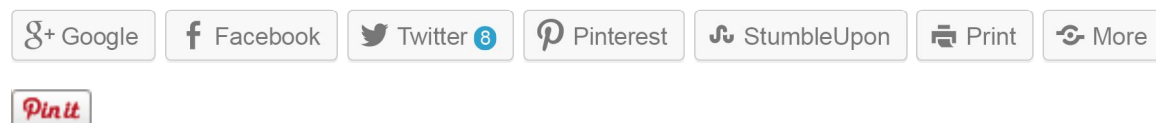
*Do you have a favorite food tour from your travels?*

*Disclaimer: The links to Amazon in this post are there for your convenience, but they also are affiliate links. Anything you buy when using the links in this post, although it costs you no more, earns a few cents for Brette Sember. She thanks you.*

*And let me hasten to inform you that although the pictures above do portray See's chocolates, they do not come from the book being reviewed. Instead we got the pictures from Flickr and use them under the Creative Commons License. You can click on any picture to learn more. The I Love Lucy video is one of several copies on YouTube.*

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#### About Brette Sember

Brette writes often about travel, food, and home arts and is the author of more than 40 books about food, law, health, family issues, business, finance and textbooks. She blogs at Putting It All on the Table and her personal web site is Brette Sember. [View all posts by Brette Sember](#) →

## 7 thoughts on “Sweet Book Treat for Valentine’s Day”



February 9, 2012 at 11:22 am

Connie

Oh my goodness, this is a must read for me- in fact, I want to get one for my parents. Sees was always THE gift people who came from the US brought to us- we would most definitely get a box of Sees- and even now, if I go and visit my brother in Canada- he requests me to bring him a box of Sees. 😊 It has such GREAT memories.



February 9, 2012 at 10:38 am

Jen

Your fudge recipe sounds delicious! See's was one of my favorite places to go when I was in high school. We would walk down to the See's, grab a sample (because, you know, we were cheap high school students!) and buy one of their lollipops. Now that I live in the South, See's is nowhere to be found. One year for Easter, my sister had it

cold shipped (imagine the cost of shipping See's chocolates to the humid South!) and we always pick some up when we travel.

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February 9, 2012 at 10:15 am

I love See's candy and am so happy to see it available locally now. And that I Love Lucy scene...one of my favorites!

Sheryl

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February 9, 2012 at 9:50 am

Story—my uncle is an electrician who worked on a job at the Jelly Belly plant. Every day there would be a bag of Jelly Bellies on this car! -r

Richard  
Mussler-  
Wright

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February 9, 2012 at 9:44 am

I think I just had a sugar rush just THINKING about all that wonderful candy. Wonder if anyone is giving me chocolate for Valentine's Day?

Vera Marie  
Badertscher

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February 9, 2012 at 9:33 am

Being a born and bred Californian, See's candies always graced our coffee tables, for the holidays. Christmas without See's, isn't Christmas to me.  
Amen.

Deborah

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February 9, 2012 at 8:09 am

i LOVE see's candies – they are a holiday treat for us in the midwest! i'll have to read this book. thanks for the review, inspiration, AND recipe!

wandering  
educators

*Comments are closed.*