

# RCI – A Great Educational Meeting in California

Lollipop production, Jelly Bellies, hand-foiling, family histories, chocolate manufacturing and contamination checks were all part of the successful RCI regional meeting in California recently. Several attendees expressed the opinion that it was one of the most educational meetings they had attended. More than 190 participants gathered to tour, learn and network. In addition to tours they shared a Candy Clinic, Kettle Talks and seminars.

## TOURS

### Jelly Belly Candy Co.

Jelly Belly demonstrated their jelly bean production process. The California facility was recently designed with an elevated, glassed-in walkway for visitors, but the RCI group was given access to the production floor.

Herm Rowland, chairman of the board, greeted the RCI visitors and spoke about the company's expansion to overseas markets and the company's interactions with politicians over the years (former President Ronald Reagan in particular).

One of Jelly Belly's product strengths is that the beans are produced with flavored centers as well as flavored shells. The touring group watched as the liquid slurry for the centers was poured into starch moulds, run through a sugar bath, panned and polished. Any flops are screened out; beans remaining after quality screening are imprinted with the Jelly Belly logo.

The doubles coming out of the revolving pan, called "Belly Flops," are packaged and sold at regular price in the company store.



Jelly Bellies before joining assortments in the packaging area.



One level of panning machines at the Jelly Belly factory.



Sally and Terry Craft (Alps Sweet Shop) and MaryAlice Meinersman (Bon Bons Chocolatier) admire the fall display in the Thompson Candy retail outlet.



RCI members Bill Malley (Malley's Candies), Cheryl, Jim and Marilyn Kobasic (Saykly's Candies) watch as a long-time Thompson employee hand-wraps large chocolate bunnies efficiently and with amazing speed.



Atop a robot within the computerized and automated packaging and storage system is JB Kid, a jelly bean character on a saddle and wearing a cowboy hat.

Later the group spent time in the Jelly Belly Gift Shop and Visitor's Center, which features artwork in jelly beans and historical photos of the company's background.

### The Thompson Candy Co.

The tour at Thompson Candy's California operation included moulding and wrapping operations. The wrapping machines automate much of the process, but there are still some products that require hand-foiling.

The day the RCI group toured the facility, chocolate Santas were being foil-wrapped and chocolate bars were being deposited with crisp rice, sent through the vibrator, cooled, demoulded and wrapped.

Thompson is working with two 10-hour shifts but is also in the process of training for three shifts. ➤