



Leslie Coopersmith, CEO of Guylian Chocolate, Retires



Guylian USA CEO Retires

Leslie Coopersmith 30 Year Veteran of Confectionery Industry

07.12.2010 – Leslie Coopersmith, chief executive officer of Guylian USA Inc. – maker of the original Belgian chocolate Seashells – has announced her retirement after more than 30 years in the confectionery industry.

Coopersmith joined Guylian in 1988 – first heading up the Belgian chocolatier's import business into the U.S. and, in 1994, establishing Guylian USA. As Guylian's president, she opened up the U.S. market to cover all classes of trade, established Guylian as a major player in the travel retail business, and positioned Guylian's Seashell chocolates as the #1 imported chocolate seashells in America. She became the company's chief executive officer in 2005. In addition, Coopersmith has served on the board of the National Confectionery Association and is currently a board member of the National Confectionery Sales Association. She was inducted into the Candy Hall of Fame in 2001.

Under Coopersmith's leadership, Guylian USA expanded its market for chocolate

gifts, as well as self-purchase. In addition to Guylian Seashells, she introduced a range of gift-boxed chocolates – including the new, award-winning Extra Dark Guylian Seashells – and launched a line of No Sugar Added Belgian chocolate bars, renown for offering a true, flavorful Belgian chocolate experience.

Coopersmith began her lengthy career in the confectionery business in 1978 at Ward Foods, then the producers of Chunky, Raisinettes and Goobers. Next, she worked for Nabisco Brands, where, in 1987, she became the corporation's first female vice president of sales. Her love of the specialty end of the confectionery business developed when she joined Droste USA. It was during her tenure there that she met Carl and Dominique Krefting, then the owners of Chocolaterie Guylian, who, said Coopersmith, "offered me the opportunity to help build the Guylian business and brand from the roots up."

To ensure a smooth transition for Guylian's U.S. operation, Coopersmith created an exit strategy that included the hiring of Michael Cobb as president of Guylian USA. Cobb's extensive experience in specialty foods includes stints at Bongrain Cheese USA, Twinings North America, Unilever Foods North America, and Procter & Gamble.

"Michael has an outstanding record in brand-building, revitalizing brands, identifying new growth opportunities, and unlocking profit and share growth potential, so I know I'm leaving the company in excellent hands," said Coopersmith.

Established in 1960, Chocolaterie Guylian is the world's leading manufacturer of premium gift-boxed Belgian chocolates and one of the fastest-growing brands in major markets worldwide, selling in 100 countries. Guylian first became known for its exquisite Guylian Seashell and Seahorse chocolates. Often imitated but never equaled in quality or appearance, Guylian Seashells are crafted of beautifully marbled milk, white and dark Belgian chocolate over a proprietary hazelnut praliné truffle center still made from the original, artisan recipe of the company's founder. Today, the company offers a range of gift-boxed chocolates, individually wrapped chocolates, and chocolate bars. In addition, Guylian is the major sustaining sponsor of Project Seahorse, an international organization dedicated to conservation of endangered seahorses and sustainable use of the world's coastal marine ecosystems. U.S. headquarters are in Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

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Twitter Pitch

Leslie Coopersmith, CEO of Belgian chocolatier Guylian USA, retires after 30 years in the confectionery industry.

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News Facts

- ▶ Coopersmith joined Guylian in 1988.
- ▶ Coopersmith established Guylian Seashells as the #1 imported chocolate seashells in America.
- ▶ Coopersmith was inducted into the Candy Hall of Fame in 2001.
- ▶ Coopersmith previously worked for Ward Foods, Nabisco Brands, and Droste USA.

- ▶ Guylian is the world's leading manufacturer of premium gift-boxed Belgian chocolates.

Resource Links

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