

STARTER

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of Levy Restaurants, the Chicago-based dining group that includes Spiaggia, Bistro 110, and the food-service operations at a number of sporting venues including Wrigley Field.

Levy grew up in Lincoln Park, the middle of five kids in a household that took fine dining for granted. ("My kids don't think it's dinner if it's not Spiaggia," her mother, Terry, jokes.) Having decided at age ten to be a pastry chef, she became the designated birthday-cake baker for friends and family, then did stints at restaurants during the summers between her years as a sociology major at Northwestern University. She enrolled at the French Pastry School in Chicago two weeks after graduating from college in 2003 and hit upon the idea to start a chocolate business while there. She adapted a recipe from one of her instructor-chefs for her company's flagship candy—the Delight, an addictive chocolate creation studded with caramelized almonds, roasted pistachios, and crispy rice.

Her father, who now lives in Del Mar, California, is bankrolling the start-up phase, but Levy seems determined to succeed on her own terms. Only six months after she started her business, the grocery giant Whole Foods came on as a wholesale customer, buying her chocolates, under the label Sarah's Pastries & Candies (www.sarahscandies.com), for its 17 stores in the Midwest. Did Dad pull some strings? "I got Whole Foods by cold-calling them," she says. Levy is now scouting locations for a storefront somewhere in the city—perhaps in Bucktown or Lincoln Park. "We eventually want to be *everywhere*," she says. And you can tell she doesn't mean just everywhere in Chicago. ■