

The Roman Candy cart is a look at, and taste of, New Orleans' past.

The Cortese family started selling the molasses taffy from the family fruit and vegetable cart in the early 20th century to help support Sam Cortese after his legs were severed by a street car. Cortese hired wheelwright Tom Brinker to make a specialized wagon so Cortese could stand on his wooden legs and make and sell the candy from the cart. He called the Italian treat "Roman Candy."



Ray Kotterman makes the candy at Jazz Fest.

The wagon, with windows all around, a marble table and running water hit the streets in 1915. That same cart, first pulled by horse, and now by mule, is still making the rounds with Cortese's grandson, Ray Kottermann behind the candy counter.

Kottermann makes about 600 sticks of hand-pulled vanilla, chocolate and strawberry taffy a day. Cortese sold the sticks for 5 cents each until 1970. Kottermann sells the treats for \$1 each.

The mule that pulls the cart knows the route so well that Kottermann can make the taffy while the mule travels the route. Occasionally, on the mule's day off, Kottermann moves the cart around by truck.



The strips of chocolate, strawberry and vanilla taffy sold for 5 cents each until 1970.

A string of horses and mules have pulled the custom-made Roman Candy cart, traveling the route while Sam Cortese or his grandson Ray Kotterman make the candy.

