

Transcript — Episode 19: The Holiday Show

[Tuning old-time tinny AM radio. Holiday music begins. Next voice processed for AM radio old-time announcer.]

Announcer: Happy Holidays! Gather round for a merry little preview of what's coming up on this episode of Inside Trader Joe's.

Suzanne: My two favorite hors d'oeuvres that I think if I didn't have out every single year, people would start not coming.

Matt: But what you do with this guy is you actually drop him into a mug of piping hot milk and he melts and it's sort of terrifying and fascinating to watch this happen...

Tara: Help me!

Maggie: So who says that your Christmas Garland has to be strung across a window or across in a doorway?

Matt: Last year 472 holiday products, this year 484 holiday products.

Kathryn: The Turkey-less Stuffed Roast is a perennial favorite in our house. It keeps the vegetarians happy.

Paul: Here's one for you.

David: *[Singing to the tune of Jingle Bells.]* Oh, winter's on, so we've gone, truffle all the way.

[Holiday music ends.]

[Sleigh bells.]

Tara: From the Trader Joe's mothership in Monrovia, California.

Matt: Let's go Ho Ho Ho Inside Trader Joe's.

[Theme music with sleigh bells begins.]

[Two bells at a neighborhood Trader Joe's.]

Tara: I'm Tara Miller, the Director of Words and Phrases and Clauses at Trader Joe's.

Matt: And I'm Matt Sloan, the Marketing Products guy.

Tara: Lots of Trader Joe's Crew Members are stopping by for our holiday podcast. [Slightly under her breath.] It's mostly to harass Matt. We'll ask them about their family's holiday traditions.

[Theme music ends.]

Tara: We've been preparing for the holidays since the holidays.

[Upbeat music begins.]

Matt: In early January, I mean the dust hasn't even really settled on the parties, but we're looking at this business on a SKU basis – stock keeping unit – S-K-U basis. Every product...how did it do? - this process to get into - how much do customers like? We had about 472 seasonal holiday related products. Of that batch, 400 of them earned the ability to return.

Tara: That's a pretty good number.

Matt: 72 out of 472 didn't make the return cut. So that creates sort of the license to hunt, if you will, for new things to bring to the stores to see what customers would like. So they come back with a haul and we have sort of a first cut. A small group of people looks at what they've found. Looking at the costing and the pricing, the degree to which this might be a duplication of things that we have.

Tara: We've talked a few times on Inside Trader Joe's about the tasting panel and that in a nutshell is the process of deciding what we're going to sell in the stores by actually tasting it.

Matt: So we have a more formal tasting panel that was in January of this year and we looked at in that first round 95 different products were presented. About 56 of them passed. So we created another holiday shopping list and those folks doing the product development work went back out into the world, found some new things. In the middle of March we got together again for another holiday tasting. Ultimately we wound up with 84 new products for this season. Last year 472 holiday products, this year 484 holiday products.

Tara: While they last...

[Upbeat music ends.]

[Door opens. Holiday music begins. Tame office party noises in the background.]

Matt: Well, you know, we're sort of gathered as we do around the cozy microphones, talking about the holidays and you know, people just drop in and hey, here's Suzanne.

Tara: And I'm going to let her introduce herself.

Suzanne: I'm Suzanne and I do work in I.T.

Matt: But not only are you a Crew Member, you're apparently a customer as well.

[Door closes in background taking party noises with it. Holiday music ends.]

[Light upbeat music begins.]

Suzanne: I have been a customer since 1987. You know, I have a very large holiday budget for Trader Joe's. I am just the sous chef in the family. My husband is the chef.

Tara: Oh, nice!

Suzanne: I have two favorite hors d'oeuvres that I think if I didn't have out every single year, people would start not coming. *(laughs)* So one of them is a homemade bruschetta and I can always count on Trader's for the Roma tomatoes and they are so just nicely ripe, with great flavor, with the organic basil and then the balsamic vinaigrette that we have. They go on a toasted sesame baguette.

Tara: Oh, okay.

Suzanne: You know, so there is one great hors d'oeuvre that's 100% Traders. I have another one that I love and that is the brie round. I smother it in brown sugar and preserves and nuts. Bake it in the oven. Bring it out nice and warm, serve it on the water crackers and it's delightful. But as a sous chef, I'm a bit of a salad aficionado. The fennel, the arugula is a great salad with the reggiano parmesan...that, in a nice lemon vinaigrette. We do a family tradition on my side of the family. My mother's side came from France. They brought along with them a very special bordelaise recipe. And that is some lovely French red wines that is reduced and reduced and reduced and it is wonderful over a nice roast.

Matt: Cooking with wine, does it, for that sauce, does it have to be a French wine? Are you looking for a certain flavor profile? Cause we get questions all the time, "I'm gonna make a

wine sauce, I'm gonna make a chicken wine dish like, coq au vin or something like that but I don't know which wine to buy." How do you go about that?

Suzanne: You know, I don't know that it necessarily has to be a French red. But because the recipe came...has its legacy, it's kind of fun just finding that, you know, bringing that French wine into it. We looked for kind of a deep red.

Matt: If I think of the fourth quarter of the calendar year and heavier meals and I think of a French red, like something from chateauneuf du pape or some of those Rhone varietals that can be heavier, higher in alcohol, just a bigger body wine. But those are often more expensive and I think that's a challenge too. If you're looking for wine that you're going to cook with, it's not going to be the most expensive bottle that you can find, necessarily.

Suzanne: Unlikely for us, that budget that I just talked about earlier doesn't really go to the wine.

Matt: You have a separate line item for that.

Suzanne: *(laughs)* Separate line item for the wine.

Tara: But I think one of the things that you hear from people a lot is, "You can cook with this wine, it's not good for drinking." But I don't think I would ever cook with a wine I wouldn't drink, because you know?...

Matt: That's like a basic premise...

Tara: Yeah.

Matt: Just on the common sense front...

Tara: Right.

Matt: If you wouldn't drink it, why would you eat it?

Tara: Yeah. So it doesn't have to be the most expensive one but...

Matt: It needs to be good.

Tara: It needs to taste good.

Matt: And then you get those comments like, "You know, Suzanne, three years ago, THAT was the sauce."

Tara: What happened?

Matt: (*chuckles*) Hey, thanks for stopping by the holiday podcast.

Suzanne: I really appreciate the invitation to be a part of your show this year and I wish you great holidays.

[Light upbeat music ends.]

[Singers warming up, singing scales, clearing throats – mi-mi-mi-mi-MI-miiii.]

Tara: Okay, well welcome to our holiday podcast to David and Paul.

Matt: David and Paul, welcome!

Paul: It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you.

David: Thank you for having us.

Tara: David and Paul work with us here in the office doing all kinds of really interesting and you may know sometimes maybe not so interesting things, but they also are really great songwriter storytellers.

Matt: I think you've got a little number for us. What's it going to be?

Paul: Here's one for you...

Paul: *[Sings to the tune of The Twelve Days of Christmas starting at 'On the 5th day of Christmas' chorus line.]* At Trader Joe's this season TJs brought these back for me, Candy Cane Joe Joe's Ice Cream, Cranberry Pistachio Biscotti, Blue Cheese Roasted Pecan Dip, Jingle Jangle Ice Cream, all are making a comeback this year.

Tara: Wow!

[Small group polite applause and chuckles.]

Matt: That is outstanding!

Paul: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

David: It's fun and informative.

Tara: All right, David, the pressure's on. Do you have one for us?

David: Well, I've got a bit of a tribute to sort of the truffle items that we're bringing in this season.

David: *[Sings to the tune of Jingle Bells starting at the 'Dashing through the snow' chorus line.]* This year at Trader Joe's, just for the holidays, watch us as we go, truffle all the way. With a truffle butter spread, and a truffle sauce that's just right, try truffle brie with toasty bread or truffle cheesy bites. Oh, winter's on, so we've gone, truffle all the way. Our truffle zest will make the best of your savory entrée, yay! Don't you skip, this truffle dip, for your winter time soiree. For truffles go to Trader Joe's, for the holidays.

Room: Yay! (applause, cheering laughter)

David: Truffles, ladies and gentlemen.

Tara: Okay, but are there more?

David: Oh absolutely!

Paul: Yes, for sure!

Tara: Okay, so we're going to do some other stuff cause there's other stuff to cover. But would you come back after you are able to spend some time just, you know, hanging out and having some eggnog at your desk?

[Door opens, letting in office party noise.]

Paul & David: Yes, we'll mix and mingle. Yeah, love to.

Matt: Maybe just grab a cookie cause we're going to need you back in a minute.

[Door closes.]

[Music begins.]

Tara: A walk through Trader Joe's this holiday season is going to reveal all kinds of savory truffles, umami truffles, the kind that you got to dig under the ground for.

Matt: There's a fungus among us.

Tara: Every day we have these oven baked cheese bites that we sell. It's a little snack product. And this year for the holidays we're bringing in a version that's oven baked cheese bites with black summer truffles. I mean, they're REALLY truffy. We also have a black truffle and Italian mushroom sauce.

Matt: This is an unctuous thick rich sauce. It's intense. And you'll notice when you see it, it's not that giant jumbo pasta sauce jar size. It's smaller because this packs a punch.

Tara: And the truffle powder seasoning.

Matt: It's a dry seasoning powder. You could really dress up a risotto. Even if you dusted macaroni and cheese with this, it would take it from, you know, hey mac and cheese to fancy pants mac and cheese.

Tara: All of these products together...if you have someone in your life who is a mycophile, someone who really loves mushrooms...

Matt: Mushroomy stuff.

Tara: ...and truffles.

Matt: Yeah.

Tara: What a great gift basket that could make.

Matt: And you would be absolutely bonkers crazy to try to do this any place else because the stuff is expensive. Don't take my word for it. You got to check it out yourself. An I'll eat my hat if...

Room: (laughter)

[Music ends.]

[Door opens with holiday office party in the background.]

Matt: Hold on, here comes Kathryn. Let's see what's going on.

Tara: Kathryn, our Legal Department...of one? (*chuckles*)

Matt: She IS our legal department.

Tara: OK Kathryn. Hey, come, have a seat. Join us.

Kathryn: Thanks.

[Door closes, takes party noise with it.]

Tara: Welcome, welcome. We are all about the holidays right now on Inside Trader Joe's.

[Upbeat music begins.]

Kathryn: For us, the holidays are all about food and my family celebrates a bunch of holidays, over the season and it's sort of one after the other.

Tara: You were telling me recently that you actually have a holiday in your family that is exclusive to your family.

Kathryn: My kids have invented a holiday called Corkswerk. You never know when it's going to show up or what the rituals will include on any given celebration. But it usually involves some kind of dessert and some dancing.

Tara: I think Corkswerk for everyone.

Kathryn: *(chuckles)*

Matt: And dancing.

Kathryn: So can I talk about Thanksgiving?

Tara: Yeah, please.

Kathryn: Which is one of my all-time favorite holidays. My family has, in any given year, a number of different dietary things to figure out. There's always a vegetarian. There's always a pescatarian. Chances are somebody's gluten free at some point. And the Turkey-less Stuffed Roast is a perennial favorite in our house. It keeps the vegetarians happy. We also do a butternut squash lasagna most years with toasted hazelnuts. We have great hazelnuts and the pre-prepped squash makes it really easy.

Matt: Eat more hazelnuts. It turns out they're great.

Kathryn: We have a cheese that we've had for the last few years in the fourth quarter called Fromage Pavé. It is incredibly good and I have been known to buy extra and freeze it to

make it stretch out the Fromage Pavé season into the new year. The Rustic Apple Tarte is a winner for me. And also the Nantucket Cranberry Pie, which comes around at some in some years for Thanksgiving but has this really nice tart sweet mix that is sort of refreshing at the end of a Thanksgiving meal.

[Upbeat music ends.]

[Door opens. Party noise in the background.]

Tara: Thank you for coming to visit us, Kathryn.

Kathryn: This is so much more fun than talking about legal stuff. Happy Holidays and Happy Corkswerk!

Matt: That's cool. Your kids are gonna freak out. They're like..

Tara: You told everybody?! *(laughs)*

[Door closes, takes party noise with it.]

Tara: Matt, we're talking about the holidays and there was a concept that I learned a few years ago that comes from Denmark.

[Happy music begins.]

Matt: Well, I've heard two pronunciations. This word is spelled H, Y, double G, E. I've heard it Hūga or Hooga.

Tara: But what it really means is like this feeling of coziness, of wellbeing.

Matt: It's like being cozy on purpose, acknowledging that it matters and doing a little bit of preparation work to have it be super great.

Tara: Sorry, but I think that a jar of Cinnamon Bun Spread is gonna do that for me. really do. I think if I have that in my pantry at any time, I can have the flavors of a cinnamon roll on a piece of regular bread, on a piece of toast, on a cracker, on whatever I want, that is contentment right there.

Matt: I will see your Cinnamon Bun Spread and raise you a whole other class of products...hot chocolate. So whether it's the sipping chocolate or even this cool new thing for this season, which is like a melting snowman in your mug hot chocolate situation.

Tara: Oh yeah, explain that a little bit.

Matt: It looks like a decorated confection, like a candy snowman. But what you do with this guy, is you actually drop him into a mug of piping hot milk and he melts and it's sort of terrifying and fascinating to watch this happen...

Tara: Help me!

Matt: And then when he melts, he lets loose, as it were, a bunch of marshmallows. There's a different way to say that, but that's what's happening. And you've got a white chocolate, milk chocolate, marshmallow topped, hot chocolate drink. And to me, you've also watched the demise of Frosty the Snowman.

Tara: For years and years and years and years we've offered a gingerbread house kit and it's hugely popular and people buy tons of them. But this year we also have an ornament cookie kit. So they're cookies shaped like Christmas tree ornaments and you decorate them and you can hang them on your tree or you could choose to eat them. Can you talk about the Christmas tree itself?

Matt: This is a really neat thing because it's a hollow chocolate Christmas tree, so it just looks like a giant chocolate Christmas tree, you know, one of those. And what you're able to do is there's a little icing kit and what is known in the candy confectionery industry is chocolate gems, you can sort of glue, if you will, with the icing, all kinds of stuff all over the tree decorating the Christmas tree. It's a pretty neat thing to do and it's actually relatively easy. Some of these kits can be challenging. This one's easy.

Tara: And then of course we have the chocolate ornaments coming back again this year that we did have last year. And those there's really no DIY at all. You just hang them on a tree. And for the adults, while the kids are doing that, this year we have sort of a partner to the Egg Nog Liqueur that we've offered in a lot of our stores, those that can sell spirits. This year we have a Hot Chocolate Hot Cocoa Cream Liqueur, I think it's called. It's that comforting, wintry drink, spiked with alcohol. I'm feeling the Hūga, Hooga. (chuckles)

Matt: Both!

[Happy music ends.]

[Crackling fireplace. Soft music begins.]

Matt: So we're sort of here cozying around the fire, the podcast fire on the Trader Joe's holiday show and Maggie just stopped by and you might remember, Maggie is our category manager for our flowers and plants business. Maggie, how's it going?

Maggie: Doing good!

Matt: This is the time when we think about having people over and making our house so welcoming and a huge part of that is how the house looks or smells.

Maggie: I just think we have an amazing amount of stuff to offer. I think you can decorate a tree. Do you want it to look natural? Do you want it to look sophisticated? Tablescaping for your house, if you're having people over for dinner.

Matt: OK, tablescaping I love this idea...using plant material to decorate a table.

Maggie: Using plant material, using dried material and putting it together and having it complement each other. And you can pull succulent plants from the succulent plant section. You can mix it with a garland from the Christmas section to do long garland down an oblong table, tuck in the succulents, add some candles, add a little bit of Carolina Birch and your dining room table can look like it just came out of the forest.

Matt: You just made that sound really...

Maggie: Easy. *(laughs)*

Matt: ...easy.

Maggie: We do at Christmas garland and the stores on the East coast and the West coast, there are a little bit different. So who says that your Christmas garland has to be strung across a window or across in a doorway? We do a Narcissus wood box. That wood box can go on your mantle. It can go on your coffee table. You could get three of them to tableescape down your long table. You could do them for Thanksgiving, hold them over through the beginning of the Christmas season, depending on what you do to complement them.

Matt: But this is effectively a potted plant.

Maggie: It's a potted plant.

Matt: So it's a growing situation.

Maggie: It is. And it looks literally like you took a little chunk of your garden, put it in a wood box and you put it on the table.

Matt: All I need to add as a decorative gnome.

Maggie: That's it.

Matt: And you've got it.

Maggie: People want to see nature. They want to see it in their house. They want to see how it progresses, how it develops. We're doing Christmas amaryllis, and we're also doing fall amaryllis, which are in really deep, deep, rich oranges, which can look beautiful on a table for Thanksgiving or we're kind of crossing the boundary if you want to have the traditional centerpiece, we have that available if you want to a long and low centerpiece. But if you want to do something more high end, more upscale, you can do something with eucalyptus, you can do something with, again, some of the succulents, some of the bulbs. I stand back and I look at the table as a whole, not just the table, but that the empty space above the table. I go into my mother-in-law's house and I've got stuff going on all over her chandelier.

Matt: Is she ok with that?

Maggie: She's cool. A meal isn't just a meal. It's not just about the food, it's about the people. It's about the light. Candlelight is amazing.

Matt: We all look better when..

Maggie: Everyone. *(laughs)*

Matt: ...lighted by candles. It's true.

Maggie: The food tastes better, the conversation is better, everything is better with mood lighting and what better time than Christmas.

Matt: Are you a fan of symmetry or asymmetrical designs when you're setting up a table with flowers?

Maggie: I mean really what's beautiful is in the eyes of the beholder.

Matt: What do you think makes a great host or hostess gift in terms of flowers or plants?

Maggie: I have yet to meet somebody who doesn't like to receive flowers. We also have the ivy wreath with the little twinkle lights, which is amazing. It's very neutral so if you're going to someone's house and they're not over the top into Christmas, or if you're going to someone's house for Hanukkah or somebody that doesn't even observe any of the holidays,

Matt: A little Festivus action.

Maggie: I love the Christmas greens. I love the smell of the Christmas greens, and to me, Thanksgiving is becoming almost more of an extension of Christmas.

Matt: Say it isn't so.

Maggie: I think Thanksgiving is its own thing, but after Thanksgiving dinner, after you've, you've celebrated with your family, what better than to make that the traditional day to start decorating your Christmas tree?

Matt: Or... go to the movies...

Maggie: (*chuckles*) I know.

Matt: ...and come back and eat leftovers? How do you bring that vibe to align with your choice of garland? I'm still struggling with this idea.

Maggie: OK so I'm using garland as a base. I'm going to do garland as a base down the table and then I'm going to get eucalyptus, tuck eucalyptus throughout the garland and then I'm going to do the gourds and the little mini pumpkins, a couple of those tucked down throughout the garland. And then I've pillar candles. You can go from Thanksgiving very easily over into Christmas. The garland will come off the table and go over the entryway into my dining room. The gourds and the pumpkins, honestly, I'll put those out front and just spray paint them.

Matt: How often are you misting things with gold paint at your house?

Maggie: (*chuckles*) You'd be surprised. I have black, white, gold and silver in my pantry cause you never know when you just need a little bling.

[Instrumental Oh Tannenbaum music begins.]

Maggie: You know, I always say the difference between a good and a bad Christmas tree, if you want it to look like a high entry, is ribbon and a focal point. So this year we're doing a Carolina Birch, and you take some of that Carolina Birch and you tuck it in the top of the tree, in the middle of the tree, at the bottom of the tree. It looks like it's a tree that stepped out of nature, perhaps a chipmunk has been burrowing in the tree. (*laughs*)

Matt: Dare we talk about cinnamon brooms?

Maggie: Oh the cinnamon brooms. You know, people have...(*laughs*)

Matt: I do know I can smell them from here.

Maggie: Who doesn't love that smell?

Matt: I have a list of people who have contacted me directly about that fragrance, but okay.

Maggie: *(laughs)* Matt gets all the emails. People just love the cinnamon broom. I think it's kind of cool. This year we are trying a new item. We are doing a pine cone for the Christmas season that is the cedar balsam scent. I thought there was a kind of a cool opportunity to bring in the Cedar Balsam Pine Cone so that if you do have a silk tree, you can put these pine cones in your house and you have a little bit of that aroma.

Matt: Maggie, thanks for coming by.

Maggie: Happy Holidays!

Matt: I wasn't sure. Are you going to sing, too?

[Knock at the door.]

Maggie: No, no, no, no, no. I'll leave that to David and Paul.

[Oh Tannenbaum music ends.]

Sound: Door opens. Holiday party noise in the background.

Matt: Oh, you're back!

Tara: Thanks again for stopping by guys. How about another?

David: Oh, absolutely.

Paul: Yes!

Paul: *[Sings to the tune of Up on the Rooftop.]* At Trader Joe's all the folks give chase for the holiday treats in the frozen case. Chocolate Lava Gnocchi and Cornbread Bites, Bacon Wrapped Dates and other such delights. Ho, ho, ho, if that weren't enough. Ho, ho, ho, we got Pimento Cheese Puffs. When you need a snack for the holidays, stop by the freezers at old TJ's.

Room: (applause and laughter)

Matt: Bravo, well done!

David: One more. This is sort of an ode to our candy aisle during the holiday.

David: *[Sings to the tune of Here We Come A-Caroling.]* Here we come to Trader Joe's straight to the candy aisle. Our Chocolate Covered Pretzel Twists are sure to make you smile. English Toffee, Brandy Beans and Dark Chocolate Peppermint Creams and our Hot Cocoa Snowman will get you through the year. Yes our holiday candies are here.

Room: (applause, cheering)

Matt: Thanks for coming to the holiday podcast.

Paul & David: Absolutely. Such a pleasure.

Tara: This is the best.

David: And happy holidays to all our customers, you know?

Paul: Yes, we hope you have a great holiday.

[Door opens. There's a party going on in the background during these lines...]

Matt: I wonder who's going to come by next.

Tara: Oh look, it's Piet, just like we had planned.

Piet: Hi, how are you guys?

Tara: We're good. How are you?

Piet: Doing great!

[Door closes. Party noises go with it.]

Tara: Hey Piet, what do you do here at Trader Joe's?

[Music begins.]

Piet: So I'm responsible for technology infrastructure for Trader Joe's. Believe it or not, we have technology in Trader Joe's. I grew up in South Africa, so holidays for me is I've never been, never used to white Christmas as I grew up with summer holidays on the beach, lots of outside food, lots of meat, lots of family together, very informal, open big family events. And then moved to the U.S. in 2010 and actually my wife, she introduced me to Trader Joe's the first time.

Matt: Was this on a date? Or were you...

Piet: You know what? She actually cooked Trader Joe's for me. Trader Joe's Seafood.

Matt: See what we did?

Piet: I know, I mean like, listen, my family is founded on Trader Joe's food.

Tara: That's enough.

Piet: I'll stop right now. (laughs)

Tara: (laughs)

Piet: My wife is from Europe, so my whole tradition from all outside food, et Cetera, shifted almost to like 80% of Christmas is now just all about holiday desserts. From the Apple Cranberry Tart, to the Lebkuchen Cookies that we have that comes out, to the Baci Chocolates that we share, that Italian chocolates, the dark chocolate with the soft hazelnut center that we give out to everybody in the neighborhood.

Matt: Nice.

Piet: I can probably tell you that the Chocolate Lava Gnocchi, for this season, is probably going to be one of the new Christmas traditions.

Tara: It's really nice of you to share your holidays with us on the podcast.

Piet: Thank you very much for having me and happy holidays!

Matt: How do you say happy holidays in South African?

Tara: Happy Holidays (laughs).

Piet: (laughs) Exactly. And Merry Christmas in Africa 'Geseënde Kersfees'.

[Upbeat music begins.]

Tara: When we're planning holiday gatherings...that really starts with appetizers. I do have a favorite. I love this little appetizer that we're calling Hold The Corn!

Matt: So we're riffing on many ice cream cones...

Tara: Right?

Matt: ...that customers loves so well.

Tara: Yep, those Hold The Cone! cones that we sell and these are called Hold The Corn!

Matt: In a cone shape.

Tara: Yeah. It literally inside has corn and seasonings.

Matt: It's a very crowd friendly flavor for sure.

Tara: But you wondered why pimento cheese wasn't a thing everywhere.

Matt: It's true, I do.

Tara: When people try these Pimento Cheese Puffs that we have coming in. Just a little puff pastry with pimento cheese and caramelized onion, I think your...

Matt: and bacon.

Tara: ...I think your desire for pimento cheese to have a wider audience may really hit.
(laughs)

Matt: Yeah. (chuckles)

Tara: Two of our returning favorites in the freezer case for appetizers and they just, they come in, they fly out, they come in, they fly out, these Scallops Wrapped in Uncured Bacon with Brown Sugar Glaze.

Matt: They're very tasty.

Tara: Just so good. And the Mini Brie En Croute, I mean it's so simple and so perfect. It does exactly what you think it's gonna do. It's piece of soft ripened cheese and a little pastry and bite size...two bite size.

Matt: Another appetizer new for this season. I'm excited about this. It's Crispy Rice, Salmon Bites And now picture, if you will, things that you might get at a Japanese restaurant, yaki onigiri or grilled rice, almost like a rice cake or a rice patty. Maybe with some dynamite sauce, like a spicy aioli mayo type of thing with some salmon on top.

Tara: So when you're done with your appetizers, you've got to move on to your main course, right?

Matt: I mean, roasting is the operative term for me for this time of year. It makes the house warm, it makes the house smell wonderful. And you can be roasting root vegetables and cauliflower and broccoli. You can be roasting different types of potatoes. And yes, you can roast poultry or a roast beast of any other variety.

Tara: (*chuckles*)

Matt: I'm so fascinated by how vegetables have gone from side car accompaniment to center of the plate. We have that leafy green salad with butternut squash. It's got some cheese and some seeds and that's a really fun thing.

Tara: We also have potato options that are pretty much ready to go that you don't have to do any roasting. You might have to warm them up a little bit.

Matt: I mean, if it's a classic scallop potato dish with sort of a creamy cheese sauce or something that makes use of more than one type of potato, one potato, two potato situation with sweet potatoes and golden potatoes and sort of gratin casserole.

Tara: No holiday meal is complete without dessert, right? In the spirit of putting everything in a cone, we have cheesecake cones. We also have cheesecake in bite form. Right?

Matt: Yes, that you get to bite.

Tara: Right, yes.

Matt: Cause cheesecake does not bite.

[Happy music ends.]

Tara: Holiday entertaining also finds a lot of cheese boards and charcuterie boards out there. And we could really talk about cheese for an entire episode.

Matt: I think we should.

Tara: In fact, we are.

Matt: Oh, good!

Tara: So that's going to be our next episode after this one.

Matt: After this one?

Tara: After this one.

Matt: OK.

Tara: So beginning of December.

[Closing theme music begins.]

Matt: And to make sure you get that cheese episode hit the free subscribe button. It is free and it's worth every penny.

Tara: So we'll have a chance to say Happy New Year on the cheese episode, but we really would like to take a moment to thank our customers for a great year.

Matt: So thank you. We get to go Inside Trader Joe's to explain how we're a little different than other stores. And the reason we get to be different, is you. Yeah, you listening right now. It turns out you like trying new products and you keep coming back for your favorites. And when our Crew Members smile, you smile. Thanks.

Tara: That gives us a feeling that can best be described as Hygge. So Happy Holidays to you and yours. Thanks for listening.

Matt: And thanks for listening.

[Knock at the door. Door opens...]

Group: HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM TRADER JOE'S! (applause)