

Transcript — Episode 30: Trader Joe's Holiday Shopping List

Matt: Wow. There is so much to say about the new products coming soon to Trader Joe's.

Tara: In that case, Matt, you'd better talk quickly, because this is one of those short mini episodes.

Matt: All right, then. Let's go Inside Trader Joe's.

[Sleigh bells over theme music and two bells ring at a neighborhood Trader Joe's.]

Tara: I'm Tara Miller, Director of Words and Phrases and Clauses.

Matt: And I'm Matt Sloan, the Marketing Product guy. We do have a lot of new products to market.

Tara: We call these shorter additions of Inside Trader Joe's, our shopping list episodes. As that implies they're meant to be listened to as you plan your next visit to Trader Joe's, or maybe on the walk or the drive to the store.

Matt: Or even IN the store. If that's where you are right now. Just take a look at all of those holiday products. I mean, up and down every aisle.

Tara: Yes. In Trader Joe's speak, we talk about products "coming in" to the store and this time of year around the holidays, there are so many coming in.

Matt: Where do we even start?

[Upbeat music begins.]

Tara: Okay, Matt, when you are having cookies or sweets or holiday stuff, you definitely always need a cup of tea or a cup of coffee. You just, you have to. And our folks have done a really good job with developing seasonally appropriate coffees and teas over the years. But I think this is the first time that they've ever developed a seasonally appropriate coffee and tea simultaneously.

Matt: Two in one!

Tara: Two in one. It's the Maple Espresso Black Tea. So it combines a maple-flavored black tea with ground espresso in a teabag. It's really cool.

Matt: It's cool, and it's great tasting. And if you have it just on its own, there actually are no calories.

Tara: Right.

Matt: But it has an amazing amount of flavor.

Tara: Yeah, and it has caffeine, obviously, because it has black tea and espresso in it, but it's not an overwhelming amount of caffeine. I mean if you make it one tea bag to one cup, it's less than 20 milligrams of caffeine in a cup, which is pretty great but it really has a nice, subtle maple-y flavor to it. It's not overwhelming.

Matt: And, you know, this year could be called Maple Rising. I mean, maple as a flavor has been on a lot of radars, and people have been interested in it. And it's, you know, I think there's a real push to sort of make it the next fill-in-the-blank thing.

[Music fades.]

Tara: Yeah, maple is having a moment.

Matt: It's a maple moment.

Tara: It's a maple moment with Matt and Tara.

Matt: This Maple Moment, brought to you by ...

[Upbeat light music begins.]

Matt: This next non-maple moment is actually brought to you by another small-lot coffee. This is a fair-trade organic coffee from San Ignacio in the Cajamarca region of Peru, which is up in the mountains, part of the Andes actually. And we're actually calling this The Spectacled Bear because of a bear that lives in this area whose markings make it look like they wear glasses. But these are beans from about 330 small-hold farmers. About a quarter of them are actually women farmers and they're running this group to provide these beans. And they're part of the fair trade program. The beans are also certified organic. They've been given sort of a medium roast. A really wonderful cup of coffee. I'm excited for this one. I think this is going to sell quickly because the value is just unbelievable.

Tara: I do love these small-lot coffees. All right, let's switch gears a little bit. We're bringing back, sort of a classic dish that people tend to associate with holiday meals and it's very much based on a classic Beef Wellington recipe. We're calling it Beef en Croute. It's a beef tenderloin top with mushrooms and wrapped in puff pastry, right? I mean, it's that really classic profile that takes a long time to make and is a little bit challenging, but we have it in the freezer.

Matt: It is really easy. If you thaw this overnight in the fridge, it's a relatively quick cook time and you can get that medium rare temperature on the inside. It's a really neat thing.

Tara: There's very little prep work, but there is some forethought, right? So you have to think to yourself on Wednesday, "All right, on Thursday, this is what's going to be dinner."

Tara: If you just take it out of the freezer and put it in the fridge the night before, it makes things that much faster, and the results are just so good.

Matt: Similarly situated in the freezer case, we have these Olive-Stuffed Chicken Bites. And I don't want to downplay their high-class qualities, but this is almost like a meatball.

Tara: Yeah, for sure.

Matt: Almost like a breaded meatball, like a kibbeh or something like that, style of meatball with some olives in the middle. So you get that great, briny, olive flavor, chicken meatball. It's really a great appetizer. I think you could make an interesting meatball sandwich with these, actually. Be curious to try that.

Tara: And they're manzanilla olives that are inside that sort of chicken meatball.

Matt: And if you take your martinis with olives, this will be a great sidecar. You know, just a little ride-along guy.

Tara: You put this on the toothpick that you put your olive on?

Matt: You could, yeah.

Tara: You'd need a very large toothpick though.

Matt: That would be a dirty martini.

Tara: Cuz they're small meatballs. (laughs) All right, Matt now we're going to talk about truffles. And I don't mean the kind of truffles that are made out of chocolate. I mean, the kind of truffles that are found under the ground. What we've learned over the last several years, our customers love truffles. And one of the other things our customers love almost without reservation is hot sauce. We can sell the heck out of hot sauce. So here, in the Truffle Hot Sauce with Black Truffles, those two tastes are combined.

Matt: Thing about hot sauce is, so many of them are just that hot and only hot, and they don't have any flavor. And this truffle hot sauce is almost overwhelmingly flavorful, certainly aromatic. So, only to be opened and shared with truffle loving friends, but this thing, as it exists in the real world, is painfully expensive. Not so in our store. That said, it's more

expensive than our normal hot sauces because of the black truffles, and the costs associated with them. It is really a delicious thing. And I think that, were you to even add this to a crudite set up, so some fresh vegetables with a little bit of this on it, I think would be wonderful. I think this would be an interesting thing to put on a basic mac and cheese.

Tara: If you're putting together gift baskets for people, it's a really great sort of foodie gift.

Matt: Oh, for sure. Like, you can just put like the whole truffle overkill basket together.

Tara: Well, speaking of that...

Matt: Speaking of that, from Italy, of course: Black Truffle Cashew Pesto Sauce. This is made with Grana Padano cheese. I'm looking forward to just simply roasting some, maybe Dutch yellow potatoes, and then taking a few heaping tablespoons of this and tossing them while they're still warm. I think that would be great. Certainly pasta, a nice piece of whitefish, simply prepared, poached, baked, little bit of this on at the end. This is a wonderful, wonderful, very rich unctuous pesto, again for the truffle lover, 'cause that truffle is very present.

Tara: So I think another use for that product could be -- did you mention this, did you mention serving it with cheese? And one of the cheeses that comes to mind. We have a Chardonnay Toscano Cheese coming in. The Chardonnay Toscano is fascinating to me because we've had the Syrah-Soaked Toscano, and we have, every year we have the Cinnamon-Rubbed Toscano...

Matt: One of my favorite repeat products.

Tara: Every year it's my favorite cheese to eat in the fall. This year, we decided to do a white wine version of the Toscano cheese. So basically, the wheel of this cheese is soaked in Chardonnay, just like the Syrah version is soaked in Syrah. So the outside of the cheese absorbs more of the flavor than the inside of the cheese. As you eat through the wedge of this cheese, the outside of the wedge definitely has more of the Chardonnay flavor than the inside of the wedge.

Matt: Sure, sure. Depending upon how you, dare I say, "Cut the cheese," I had to. And I want to mention a cheese that I wasn't familiar with until our most recent holiday tasting, and it's from Norway. It goes by the name of Nøkkelost. And it reminds me of Havarti, of a delicious sort of creamy, bouncy, springy textured Havarti, with the interesting inclusion of cumin seeds. I think this would be really great melted on sandwiches, a grilled cheese sandwich, as part of a cheese platter with other things. Cumin is certainly a very specific flavor, so if you're not a fan of cumin, I would say totally pass on this cheese.

Tara: Let me ask you a question because I love cumin. Are the seeds, are they ground or are they whole, and do they add texture as well as flavor?

Matt: They are somewhere in between.

Tara: Okay.

Matt: So they aren't whole seeds, but they aren't pulverized powdered cumin seeds as well. So they're sort of small flecks. It's sort of a warm flavor, a warm spice flavor, which I think is great for the colder months and that time of year.

Tara: That sounds delicious. You know what else sounds delicious, Matt? The handcrafted soap set, you know, for those times when you're, when you get your mouth washed out with soap. There's no better transition out of cheese than into a gift set of soap. I love soap. These little soaps are a phenomenal value.

Matt: Sure if you go to those stores that specialize in that very rough hewn, handmade slabs of soap cut to order kind of thing, this stuff's expensive and this price is incredible. It's a set of three, so there's three different types of soap. There's a charcoal and tea tree, a lavender eucalyptus, and a coffee soap too that just smells so good. Like it's tempting not to just want to try to wash your mouth out with that one.

Tara: (laughs) See, I told you, this is a delicious product. There are a lot of gifty items in our stores this time of year. This really is the time to get them because once they go, they don't come back.

Matt: So if you've got someone on your list needing to clean up their act, you gotta, you know, get into the store quickly and get this.

[Music ends. Ding!]

Tara: Time's up!

[Transition to close. Closing theme music begins.]

Matt: Wow. This IS a short episode. There are lots more new products we could talk about.

Tara: We appreciate you taking a few minutes to hear about a few of our personal favorites.

Matt: We really do. Thank you for spending some time with us on the podcast, or checking out the Fearless Flyer, or our Instagram.

Tara: Or with our crew in the stores.

Matt: Yes. Especially time in the stores. We don't take that for granted.

Tara: If you would, please take a moment and hit that free subscribe button wherever you got this podcast.

Matt: It is free, and worth every penny.

Tara: Until next time, thanks for listening.

Matt: And thanks for listening.

Tara: And happy holidays!

Matt: Happy Holidays.