

Transcript — Episode 35: A Trader Joe's Shopping List to Liven Up Your Spring Eating

[Game show music begins.]

Matt: Look at this studio filled with glamorous prizes!

[Music grinds to a halt as Tara interrupts.]

Tara: No, no, no, no, no, no! Wait, this is a shopping list episode of Inside Trader Joe's.

Matt: Oh.

[Music returns.]

Matt: (announcer voice) Look at this test kitchen filled with glamorous new Trader Joe's products.

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

Matt: (announcer voice) Let's go Inside Trader Joe's.

[Theme music begins and two bells ring at a neighborhood Trader Joe's.]

Tara: This is Tara Miller, Director of Words and Phrases and Clauses at Trader Joe's.

Matt: And I'm Matt Sloan, the Marketing Product Guy. And for this episode, the Game Show Announcer Guy.

Tara: Let's play a little game with this. We can call it, "What's my favorite!" I'll put my...

Matt: But may I?

[Game show music again.]

Matt: (announcer voice) What's my favorite!

Tara: Let's each write down our personal favorite new Trader Joe's product.

[Game show music ends.]

Matt: But I really love them all. Do I have to choose just one?

Tara: Just one.

[Upbeat music begins. Writing with a squeaky marker.]

Tara: Okay, mine is on this card. Don't look.

[Writing with a squeaky marker.]

Matt: I've got mine.

Tara: We'll put them in these envelopes and hermetically seal them.

[Sealing envelope.]

Matt: Done.

Joe-Joe's

Matt: Okay, I'll start. Your favorite new Trader Joe's product is this...

Tara: (tasting item) Mmmm.

Matt: Are you like in a sugar-free space? Cause that's going to like...

Tara: Not right now I'm not! Mmmm. (mouth full of item) Oh I love this, but you're wrong.

Matt: Wait a minute. That was a Chocolate and Peanut Butter Joe-Joe Cookie. You love Joe-Joe's. So we have for the winter holidays that astounding collection of covered Joe-Joe's, this was inspired by that. But the tasting panel kept making that product presenter go back to the drawing board. We went from a dark chocolate coating to a milk chocolate coating to a peanut butter coating. I think it was worth it.

Tara: (mouth full of cookie) I remember the whole tasting panel process because I was there as well, but it's been months since I've tasted this cookie. I don't want to stop eating it.

Matt: So will this be your favorite?

Tara: Well, (laughs) I might've changed my mind because this is not what I wrote down, but (eating cookie) it's very good. You really should try one.

Almonds

Tara: My first guess is that your favorite new product is...that...in that bag right there.

Matt: All-most.

Tara: (laughs) I liked the way you did that because they're all-monds. These Almond Butter Almonds. (shaking bag) Let's try it.

Matt: A little more savory, saltiness than I remembered and I like that.

Tara: They are not overly sweet.

Matt: We're going to have to set expectations for this product because it looks candy-esque and people will expect a sweeter flavor profile.

Tara: You like, put it in your mouth and it's crunchy because that almond is, it's a really good quality crunchy almond inside.

Matt: We do start with the roasted almond, which is the key that's going to be the secret. So you get that crisp roasted texture. I mean, I love it, but it's not my favorite of the favorite list here.

Tara: All right. If I guess your favorite new product, let me know.

Matt: Okay and you do the same.

Grapefruit

Tara: There's something we can't eat made with grapefruit and there's something we can eat made with grapefruit. How about we go there next?

Matt: Okay, I'll take topical applications for 500. So Grapefruit Body Butter, a new scent, a new flavor, if you will, in our incredibly popular line of body butters, like previous versions, this one is based on coconut oil. So the same moisturizing characteristics, and it has this great grapefruit smell.

Tara: It's a very comfortable and warm aroma. I like it. And it has aloe in it.

Matt: It does have aloe in it.

Tara: It has vitamin E in it.

Matt: Fun, little seasonal addition.

Tara: That should probably be landing in stores early to mid March, sometime in there. So people, you should look for that.

Matt: It does smell good enough to eat.

Tara: Okay, so that's a great transition for me to go to something that is good enough to eat and you can actually eat it. One of the challenges of grapefruit can be peeling it. The skin is so thick. We have these new Ruby Red Grapefruit Segments that are already peeled and in a package for you, ready to eat.

Matt: If you're on a space station and having brunch, this is what you would have.

Tara: (laughs)

Matt: I'll take a moment to acknowledge how great life is when our biggest challenge is, "God, that grapefruit is a real pain in the neck to deal with!"

Tara: It's a pretty cool product because it's really fresh, really juicy.

Matt: Many people don't care for the slight bitterness that comes in the taste of a fresh grapefruit and that bitterness is in the inside, the membrane and that white pithy part. And this gets rid of all that.

[Music ends.]

Ciders

Tara: What else is new at Trader Joe's right now?

[Upbeat music begins again.]

Matt: Fermented beverages, you know, things like kombucha, Kefir water, even drinking vinegars have been getting a lot of attention, which is kind of exactly what we've done with these two new organic sparkling apple cider vinegar beverages. We've got two flavors, a Ginger Lemon and a Lemon Strawberry. I think of them as a soda replacement really and they have a nice, bright, vibrant flavor. (can opening sound) So I'm going to crack one. I just did. And let's give it a shot.

Tara: Well, I'm going to do the same. (can opening sound)

[Music transition to slow oldies music.]

Matt: You know, this sounds like a night from my youth with all this can opening going on here.

Tara: I'm a kombucha drinker. I really like kombucha and I know that this doesn't have those same sort of probiotic benefits, but this reminds me of kombucha. And I really like it. I'm kind of surprised. I'm kind of surprised just how much (can opening sound) I like it.

Matt: Very tart, very tangy.

Tara: Okay, so this one is the Sparkling Lemon Strawberry Apple Cider Vinegar Beverage. And I like this one even more than I liked the Ginger and Lemon. I wonder if you could use the Ginger and Lemon one to make a version of like a Moscow mule.

Matt: Like, you know, like a bad attitude Moscow mule.

Tara: Is there any other kind?

[Music ends.]

Oven Baked Cheese Bites

Matt: Okay, what's next on this shopping list?

[Upbeat music begins.]

Tara: I'm super excited about the Oven Baked Cheese Bites with Tomato and Chili. So it's kind of like, spicy, pizza flavored oven baked cheese bites.

Matt: I don't remember them having chili. They have chili?

Tara: Yeah. So remember when we first tasted them? They were presented to the tasting panel as pizza, pizza flavor? And we all thought they're just a little too close to the original, like they're not different enough. And so the product developer went back to the supplier and asked for some heat. And so now they have a little heat in them.

Matt: Yeah. So it tastes like pizza with the jar of red pepper flakes on the red white check tablecloth next to it. Perfect. Now I remember.

Tara: They're not overly spicy.

Matt: This is a classic example from the line extension playbook. You know, let's break in with a retail jargon alert.

[Electronic news flash sound.]

Matt: Line extension - taking an existing idea and changing its flavor, adjusting it slightly, adding to and creating the line of those products. We started with one, the Plain Baked Cheese Bites, they were popular. We did a special holiday version of Truffle Cheese Bites and I think those have now become an everyday product, they're so popular. So if two is good, three must be better. We always do that and sometimes it even works. I think this'll be really popular.

Tara: These are gluten-free. I would advocate for using them on top a bowl of soup. They're really good in place of traditional crackers on top of soup.

Matt: Oh it's like fricot. This is like handy fricot. So you don't have to make fricot where you're like, "How do I freaking make fricot?" And so now you just have this thrown in a bowl of soup. I love it!

Tara: And also equally good in place of croutons on a salad.

[Music ends.]

Gluten-Free Muffins

Tara: Hey Matt, the next item I think may just be your favorite.

Matt: Okay, lay it on me.

[Music begins.]

Tara: Okay, the Gluten-Free Cinnamon Coffee Cake Muffins.

Matt: So close. So close. I love cinnamon and sugar and this is that plus it's so, so tasty. I sometimes get a little anxious when we put certain claims on a label. So this label says that these muffins are moist and it's like, "Oh, I hope they really will be cause we've got to live up to that." These deliver. They're incredibly moist.

Tara: Oh my gosh, they're so moist.

Matt: Visually when you break it apart, you might think, "Oh, chocolate chips." Those are cinnamon chips. So it has this incredible cinnamon flavor. So, so good.

Tara: I would probably maybe warm them in the oven or even in the microwave for a few seconds because I feel like having them warm might enhance that flavor even further because they're so cinnamony.

Matt: You could try in the air fryer.

Tara: If we've learned one thing so far in 2021, is that you can do anything in the air fryer.

Matt: Make ice cream in the air fryer.

Tara: Okay, that might not work.

Tara's Favorite

Matt: Okay, by process of elimination, I'm going to guess that your favorite product out of this incredible batch is the Cold Brew Coffee and Boba Coconut Non-Dairy Frozen Dessert.

[Ding, ding, ding, ding!]

Tara: Yes! It is so good. It is so good. It's cold brew coffee ice cream with boba, except it doesn't have any cream in it, right? So it's, I don't know, that's a really convoluted way of saying it's called non-dairy frozen dessert.

Matt: This is a message for all you regulatory folks out there. We can say ice cream and it's okay. Things will still function, the sun will rise tomorrow. Okay, even though no dairy was used in this it's ice cream. Of course we didn't say that on the label because we're regulatorily correct. But still, let's try some of this.

Tara: (eating) Oh, I already am. It's made with coconut milk, but it doesn't taste like coconut. And there's something really cool to me about the combination of the coffee flavor and the boba, the little tapioca pearls.

Matt: I still say this tastes like Kahlúa.

Tara: That's not a bad thing though.

Matt: It kind of has like a little mud slide action going on.

Tara: Mm, (mouth full) you could add some vodka to it in a blender and make a milkshake.

Matt: I hope we're recording cause that is...

Tara: (laughs)

Matt: ...because that is the ticket, right there, people.

Tara: (chuckles) I'm just going to say, it's really hard to talk with ice cream and boba in your mouth cause it's really cold and then chewy.

Matt: Doing so is like a dental sensitivity check. It's like, "Oh man, there's that one."

Tara: Oh, that's the one.

Matt: This is really good.

Tara: By the time this episode airs, it should be in stores.

Matt: I love it. And I'm going to still call it ice cream.

Tara: And also important to point out, not only is it non-dairy, but it's vegan. We don't say it's vegan until we have confirmed with our supplier that all of the ingredients in a recipe are vegan and can be confirmed as such.

Matt: And weirdly enough, regulators will climb your tree about ice cream, but they don't look at vegan so much.

Tara: They'll climb your tree?

Matt: Up a tree with a regulator. That's my next show...tune in.

[Music ends.]

Cauliflower Dip

Matt: Okay, what's next on this shopping list?

[Light upbeat music begins.]

Tara: There are lessons to be learned, Matt. And one of my big takeaways is there is nothing cauliflower can't do. I never thought I would say those words because cauliflower has long...HAD long been my least favorite vegetable, just didn't like it. I eat it all the time now in all different kinds of ways. I eat riced cauliflower. I eat fried cauliflower. I eat roasted cauliflower. I'm about to go buy this Creamy Cauliflower Jalapeño Dip because it just has everything going on. It has creamy, creamy, creamy texture. It has a little kick from the jalapeño. It's super cheesy cause it has cream cheese, it has Parmesan cheese, it has ricotta cheese. And yet each serving is 40 calories.

Matt: And so now you just listed off a bunch of ingredients, but what's the main ingredient?

Tara: The number one ingredient on the ingredient deck on the label is cauliflower.

Matt: So cauliflower first. For those of you keeping score at home, ingredients are listed in order of predominance of weight. This is mostly cauliflower.

Tara: I'm a huge fan of taking our cold refrigerated dips and eating them hot.

Matt: This actually is nice warmed. And I would even take that a step further. I would take something like our focaccia or even a pizza crust, or just cut a baguette in half, spread a nice layer of this on top and broil it for a little bit. And I think that would be a really great way to use this.

Tara: So I'm going to make a shameless plug for the Trader Joe's YouTube channel right now because we actually have a video on our YouTube channel that gives you some ideas for how to use our cold dips in both cold and warm situations.

Matt: We've got a how-to video on that?

Tara: We do.

[Music ends.]

Burrito

Tara: Do you want to eat the burrito? I can go heat it up?

Matt: I love me that burrito.

[Microwave buttons in background.]

Matt: Okay, next from our list.

[Light music begins.]

Matt: And this was a real contender for my favorite and I mean...

Tara: Me too.

Matt: I love this cause I love burritos. And so I'm just going to do a short reading from the label. Vegetable Samosa Burrito. A vegan samosa inspired filling of potatoes, cauliflower, carrots, and peas with savory spice tomato chutney in a flour tortilla. That's pretty much it. And it doesn't even begin to get close to how tasty this is and how aromatic it is when you heat it up. It's just got this wonderful, warm aroma.

[Plate noises.]

Tara: Mm mm mm.

Matt: It's sweeter than I remember it.

Tara: Is it?

Matt: In a good way.

Tara: Yeah.

Matt: And then carrots and stuff.

Tara: It's kind of perfect.

Matt: This is in that category within the store that we call fresh. It's in the refrigerated case. This is something that is made and delivered daily. Nutritionally it is vegan. The whole burrito, 480 calories, 11 grams of protein, nine grams of fiber. This is a really great meal.

[Music ends.]

Banana Spread

Tara: Okay, next.

[Music begins again.]

Matt: Next to peanut butter and jelly, think of this as banana jam. Really on the label, Organic Banana Fruit Spread. Visually, it kind of looks like butterscotch pudding or something like that.

Tara: And I'm sort of intrigued by the idea of maybe putting it on a sandwich with peanut butter.

Matt: Hm mm.

Tara: And it's only going to be in stores for a while.

Matt: Put some of this inside of like a peanut butter cupcake or something. I think this is going to be a hit.

[Music ends.]

Matt's Favorite

Tara: Okay, Matt, I'm going to take a guess.

[Timpani roll.]

Tara: It has to be Rutland Red. That has to be your favorite.

Matt: Finally.

[Ding, ding, ding, ding! Crowd applauding.]

Matt: You know me so well. You are correct. Rutland Red Leicester Cheese, that's my favorite. Here's why.

[Upbeat music begins.]

Matt: Now about 120 miles North, Northwest of London give or take is the landlocked County of Leicestershire and Leicester the city within that County, it's actually run independently of the County, but nevermind their motto in Latin "Semper Eadem" (always the same). And that emphasis on tradition is what makes this traditionally made cheese so darn great.

Tara: Okay, so tell me about the flavor of this cheese.

Matt: You know, some might want to call it a cheddar and while you'd be close, there's some differences there.

Tara: It's called Rutland Red, but it's more orange, right? It's like a deep orange color.

Matt: It has a really nice ruddy complexion, if you will. Kind of like the French cheese Mimolette, if you know that, of course you do.

Tara: It's part of our spotlight cheese program. It's our way of introducing cheeses that we don't sell every day, but like we'll have them for maybe a month, maybe a little bit more than a month and we bring in 10 or 12 of these a year.

Matt: And we're so lucky to have it. We were able to get 40,000 pounds, which is a massive amount of cheese all at once, but it means that each store probably on average gets maybe 75-80 pounds. It'll go fast.

Tara: Just the month of March or until it's gone.

Matt: If there's great demand and interest, you know, hopefully we could make a repeat purchase in the future.

Tara: But we're looking at at least a year to do that because the milk has to be collected and it has to be made into cheese.

Matt: It's actually what they call a bandage wrapped cheese. So they actually wrapped the wheels in cloth and they actually use a butter paste on the outside of that cloth to sort of keep the moisture in and to control the aging process. The version that we're selling is actually, I think it's aged 10 months. Yes, that's right. And so during that aging, the affinage, to use the French word, because French used to be the court language in England so we can do that. During that 10-month period, if you just have it sit out in the open, it will dry out. So that butter coated bandage wrapped, it sounds like, you know, a spa treatment for this cheese, that's a secret to how it develops, matures.

Tara: (responding quickly trying to rush Matt to wrap up) Okay, great.

Matt: This is a really great cheese, this Rutland Red. It's made by a small farmers cooperative.

Tara: (answering quickly) Excellent.

Matt: That cooperatives have been going for about 110 years. It was formed in 1911.

Tara: (rushing Matt) Sounds good. Okay, Rutland Red. Got it.

Matt: They might've been working before 1911, but they were formally organized as a co-op in 1911.

Tara: Ah, gee, look at the time.

[Sudden transition into close. Closing theme music begins.]

Matt: Hey, how about a bonus round of what's my favorite?

Tara: Not today. We just end by reminding everybody to hit that free subscribe button.

Matt: It *is* free and worth every penny.

Tara: Until next time, thanks for listening.

Matt: And... (clears throat, announcer style) thanks for listening.

[2 second pause.]

Distant engineer: Okay.

Tara: You are so bizarrely good at that...at that voice.

Matt: (snickers)