

Transcript — Episode 38: A Trader Joe's Shopping List to Add Sparkle to Your Summer

[Crowd at the local pool.]

Tara: I know we talked about this being the swimsuit edition.

Matt: Yes, and here I am. Ready to dive into Trader Joe's new products for summer.

[Swimmer diving into pool.]

Tara: But we weren't serious, Matt.

[Silence.]

Matt: We weren't?

Tara: Just not appropriate.

Matt: Okay. Uh, hit the theme music and I'll go grab an Aloha shirt.

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

Tara: I'm Tara Miller, the director of words and phrases and clauses.

Matt: And I'm Matt Sloan, the marketing product guy.

Tara: It's summertime.

Matt: Time to grill some kebabs, butter your body, sparkle your water, chill your barbeque sauce, and dare to eat a peach.

Tara: You looked at the list (laughs). That pretty much sums up our new products.

Matt: Okay, let's start with returning summertime hits and first on that hit parade list, Lemon Baton Wafer Cookies.

[Theme music ends. Light upbeat music begins.]

Matt: They're so good. Those are the...I'm going to read right from the canister, that cylinder tubelike container, "Delicate rolled wafers filled with lemon flavored cream. They're light, they're bright, they're crispy."

Tara: It's been a while since I've had these. So (opening canister) there we go. I want to give them a try because I remember...

Matt: I like how the lid kind of rang like a small bell.

Tara: There we go (rustling noises).

Matt: 24 hours later...

Tara: (long sniff) Oh, they're so lemony smelling but not like artificial yucky household cleaner lemon, like it smells like actual lemons.

Matt: (complicated sniff) I'm going to say that that smells like Meyer lemons folded into Crème Fraîche. There's a little tangy lactic kind of back note to that aroma. Lemon Baton Wafer Cookies are back, but not forever.

Tara: Another one that's back just for the summer season is Key Lime Tea Cookies which are shortbread cookies, just like on the package, it says with powdered sugar.

Matt: I think of those as summer's Pfeffernüsse because of the danger factor of the powdered sugar. Like if you inhale sharply with one of those near your mouth, be careful (choking noise).

Tara: (laughs)

Matt: And then I'm all of a sudden in a powdered sugar coma or something. So I have to be careful.

Tara: What should we try next? I'm the loud package opener today so..(opening package). You open up the box and there's a little bag...oh, this one was so easy to open, yay!

Matt: That's because you've been working out.

Tara: We've kind of made a thing out of key lime at Trader Joe's. I mean, we have the Key Lime Tea Cookies...

Matt: I can see the letters coming in now, "Dear Trader Joe's, you did not invent key lime." No, we made a thing of it.

Tara: We made a thing of it in our stores for the summertime because our Key Lime Pie is such a...like that comes back every summer and people are so excited about it. And then people are kind of annoyed with us that we take it away in the off season. We'll admit that. But this year we have another key lime product, right? We have Key Lime...

[Drum roll.]

Tara: ...Kettlecorn.

Matt: I'd like to issue a challenge for us. I want more key lime things. Like I want like a key lime beverage, like a Key Limeade or something. I think that that would be good.

Tara: That's a very cool idea.

Matt: You know what else is coming back that I get so excited for every summertime, stone fruit, specifically peaches, nectarines. We've got those, it's a four pound box. They're ripened a little longer than sort of traditional grocery store fruit. And that level of ripeness means a slightly softer piece of fruit and that's what brought about the need for that box. So the box isn't just cute, although it certainly is, but it serves a functional purpose. It protects that fruit.

Tara: I love to buy those boxes because at least in my house, it sort of encourages every single person in the house to just grab a piece of fruit because there's something about them being in that box that just everyone gravitates towards it.

Matt: So I'm thinking of J. Alfred Prufrock, as I often do. He's wearing white trousers. He's walking the beach wondering, "Should he dare to eat a peach?" He's heard the mermaids sing, each to each. I'm wondering peach or nectarine? Do you have a preference?

Tara: Yes, I do. Nectarine for sure.

Matt: Really?

Tara: I'm one of those people who likes them a little firmer. And I feel like nectarines tastes better when they're firmer than peaches do.

Matt: Totally agree. A nectarine is a great crunchy thing and a peach is better, a little softer.

Tara: Four pounds of fruit for \$6.99. I don't know. I think that's a pretty cool thing that we've had, how many years now?

Matt: Oh, goodness. I mean, you know, probably getting close to 10 years, maybe even longer.

Tara: Hey Matt, before we move on, let's head outside and get the grill started so that we're ready to do our cooking.

Matt: Let's take this podcast outside for a few minutes.

[Music ends. Transition to airy music. Prepping BBQ grill outside.]

Matt: It's hot. We're ready to grill.

Tara: Matt, tell me what we're putting on the grill now.

Matt: So we have from the fresh meat category, we've got a couple of kebab products. So the first up is choice grade, USDA choice grade Angus tri-tip kebabs in sort of a sweet and savory marinade, (meat sizzling on the BBQ grill) interesting with a tamarind base sauce. So that's really good and wow, just dropping those on the grill that smells incredible. And then we've got a chicken thigh kebab with sort of a Thai style coconut curry sauce. And these are on very thick bamboo skewers. Thick so that they hold up and don't burn and completely fall apart with the heat of the grill. I'm thinking that we're just going to cook them on one side, turn them over and they should be done. They should cook relatively quickly.

Tara: There's a ton of meat on the skewers. Like there's two skewers in a package and it's a pound of meat.

Matt: Yeah.

Tara: That's a lot.

Matt: And it's just meat. So there's no vegs or things like that. I love the visual of adding vegetables, but they cook at different rates and it's just a tricky thing. So this is just two skewers, eight ounces each, eight ounces of choice tri- tip or eight ounces of chicken thigh with those flavors, those marinades, very convenient, very, very easy. We're also going to try to grill a Garlic Bread Cheese. Now this is kind of going to sound a little crazy cause it's not bread, it's cheese.

Tara: So the package directions on the cheese say to microwave it or sauté it in a pan and we're like throwing caution to the wind and putting it straight onto the grill grates to see what happens.

Matt: Because why not?

Tara: Right.

Matt: Why not?

Tara: You can see the cheese. You can see it softening. Like it's definitely not melting into the grate. But you can see that the texture of the cheese kind of softening in there.

Matt: And so this is not a free flowing melty, ooey, gooey cheese. This is a cheese that has been made to withstand some heat. It's a low moisture cheese. We talked about this served with a red sauce, like a marinara, but I'm going to say, make a version of caprese salad. This Garlic Bread Cheese on the grill is going to come off probably first.

[Spatula scraping and then flipping on the grill.]

Tara: So how about while the kebabs are finishing we try this Garlic Bread Cheese?

[Removing cheese from grill.]

Matt: That is a tasty, tasty cheese.

Tara: I don't really understand how it tastes like there's bread here. Because it kind of tastes like it's a sandwich and it's really just the baked top of the cheese.

Matt: It's that browning. It's that Maillard reaction. It's sort of the caramelized flavor coming through and so this is probably closest to, or modeled after a Finnish baked cheese. Has got a lot of letters. I think it's pronounced like, "Who sta LÖPA." Or something like that or, "Who sta Loupa."

Tara: Someone will tell us.

Matt: I'm probably putting the emphasis in the wrong place but it's J-U-U and then a bunch of other letters after that...Finnish bread cheese.

Tara: Is it wrong for me to say I'm going to finish this bread cheese?

Matt: N, because it's really good. And vampires beware cause there's a lot of garlic, so you will have no problems with any vampire activity.

Tara: How are we doing on these kebabs?

Matt: They got a couple more minutes. Let's pop back inside. We can run through a couple more products. That'll leave just enough time for these kebabs to finish off perfectly.

[Music ends. Back indoors.]

Tara: What should we try next?

[Upbeat music begins.]

Tara: There's so many new products.

Matt: I'm thinking something summery. And actually we've got this really interesting, very limited, very special body butter coming out. Brazil Nut Body Butter made with açai and Guaraná extracts. It's modeled after something that some people might have experienced elsewhere. And it's this luxurious creamy coconut oil based body butter. It's got this incredibly bright fuchsia pink lid. It's so cool looking.

Tara: Yeah, so a couple of things. One, body butter, do not eat. It is for the exterior of your body.

Matt: Topical application only, okay.

Tara: Not the interior of your body. And second point is, I am absolutely the customer for this (pop opens jar) so I'm going to pop the lid a little bit and give it a try. It's super...

Matt: Would you say whipped?

Tara: I would say whipped cause I was going to say it's fluffy. I'm rubbing this into my hands and on my arms and I love the scent. It's because it's not a really strong scent, but it's a really lovely scent.

Matt: And it's made with Brazil nuts. Brazil nut trees grow like over a hundred feet high and they're incredibly long-lived trees. And the nuts themselves are within this large fruit that probably weighs five or more pounds. And you harvest them after the fruit falls. So tree...greater than 100 feet tall...five pound fruit falling. I don't know. It's like good grief, that is a dangerous situation.

Tara: Okay, but the body butter, not dangerous at all.

Matt: I guess like if you're on the beach and in Rio, you have to like tone up your backside, this is the stuff.

[Music ends.]

Tara: Another thing that's not edible for humans...I mean, I guess it is, but it's intended for non-humans...are these new Deli Style Corn Beef Flavored Dog Treats.

[Upbeat music begins.]

Matt: The dog days of summer! Nine out of 10 dogs would eat corn beef well past St. Patrick's Day.

Tara: Some dogs are picky, so there are treats that some dogs just won't eat. These were approved by many dogs here at Trader Joe's.

Matt: Alright. You can make a Reuben sandwich for your dog.

Tara: I was thinking that actually.

Matt: Okay, next up and I guess under the general heading of upping our gummy game, Sweet and Deliciously Fruity Gummy Candies. It is vegetarian. Classic gummies are made with a gelatin and animal byproduct base. These are not. These are vegetarian. Texturally these are very close. Dare I say identical to that classic gummy toothsome texture. So you might say, "Matt, why are these existing if you already have Scandinavian Swimmers?"

[Off-mic voice.]

Ben: Matt, why are these existing if you already have Scandinavian Swimmers?

Matt: Great question. Here's why...they're different. Scandinavian Swimmers are like that favorite fish that we all love. Texturally a little softer and easier chew, less toothsome. These Sweet and Deliciously Fruity Gummy Candies are a little bit of a workout chewing wise, in a great way. And the flavors on these are interesting because the flavors used have actual fruit components in them so you'll see specific fruits called out. Pineapple, mango, grapefruit watermelon, blueberry. So actual pineapple was used in the pineapple flavor and it tastes like a pineapple.

Tara: The flavors are excellent. I have the watermelon one in my mouth right now.

Matt: There's a real point of difference here.

Tara: Oh, the pink grapefruit one's really good.

Matt: Yeah, so good. We're hoping that people like them and that they get to stick around because I think that they are a great product. But we'll see.

[Music ends.]

Tara: I want to go back into sort of like grocery stuff.

[Music begins.]

Tara: If you look at the rice section of our grocery aisle, you'll find jasmine rice and basmati rice and sort of more, not exotic rices, but not the things you find in a traditional grocery store so much. And this newer product is kind of more like what you'd find in a traditional grocery store.

Matt: If it was the greatest grocery store on earth.

Tara: It's Calrose Rice.

Matt: All rice starts out as brown rice. White rice has had that outer bran, the hull and the oil removed. And probably originally that was done for shelf life purposes. They're a medium grain rice and what that means, it has to do with the ratio of length to width. So a medium grain rice is two to three times as long as it is wide.

Tara: I really love the flavor of this rice. There's something very, very clean and very simple about it. And when you cook it, it's simultaneously fluffy and a little sticky, which to me is perfect.

Matt: You could make risotto. You could make paella with it. This will be great with a poke bowl. It's really wonderful.

[Music ends.]

Tara: Okay...

Matt: Cold Brew Barbecue Sauce?

Tara: Cold Brew Barbecue Sauce. I'm going to open the bottle.

[Music begins.]

Matt: We have a new barbecue sauce. It's made with coffee. And before you say, "Matt, that sounds totally nuts."

[Off-mic voice.]

Ben: Matt, that sounds totally nuts.

Matt: No, no, before you say that, remember we also have that returning spice, the BBQ Rub and Seasoning with Coffee & Garlic. So wonderful. That coffee flavor works so nicely on grilled things. This cold brew coffee barbecue sauce makes me think of Creole coffee, coffee, chicory, and molasses, of course. And there's a lot of cold brew coffee in this barbecue sauce.

Tara: You can really taste the coffee and you can really smell the coffee too. I think I would say that would actually be a great dipping sauce for our Gluten-Free Chicken Nuggets. And obviously brushed on some chicken at the end of the grilling session as well would be pretty cool.

Matt: Sure. Or on a burger.

Tara: It's supposed to be here at the end of June and this episode will first air at the end of June so...

Matt: That actually might work.

Tara: Yeah, that works out.

[Music ends.]

Tara: Hey, let's head back outside to see how those kebabs are doing.

[Upbeat music begins. Back outside. Sizzle noise.]

Matt: I'm actually enjoying the slight smell of wood smoke that's coming from the kebabs. Like the skewer sticks sort of slowly charring on the very ends there. I like that smell.

Tara: Are we ready to cut into these things yet?

Matt: I think so.

Tara: Yeah?

Matt: (clink noise on plate) The beef.

Tara: (chewing) Oh my gosh. That's delicious. It's not overly sweet. It has a nice tang to it. There's a teeny little kick. Like it's not entirely without heat. There's a smidge of heat there, but I wouldn't call it spicy.

Matt: All right so that was the sweet and savory beef kebab, the choice Angus tri-tip. So tri-tip, I don't know why I never thought of tri-tip as something to put on a kebab, but it makes perfect sense and nice and lean and also tender. So there's not a lot of stuff that you wouldn't want and because the beef kebabs, because they were so lean, even over the open flame, not a lot of oil or fat flare ups, so pretty easy to successfully cook on the barbecue.

Tara: And then here's the chicken.

Matt: That Thai Coconut Curry Spicy Chicken.

Tara: Oh my goodness!

Matt: That's the thigh meat.

Tara: Lemon grass? Am I tasting lemon grass? Is that in there? That's so good. It's really tender. Sometimes thighs can be a little on the fatty side. I'm not getting any of that here. Like the meat has been so well trimmed.

Matt: It kind of, to me, tastes like classic Thai Red Curry as barbecue chicken skewer.

Tara: I think this chicken would be really terrific on a salad, either warm or cooked and refrigerated because it just has so much flavor. I think with a whole bunch of greens, it would just like, you almost wouldn't even need a salad dressing.

Matt: Wow, so those are good. Good and easy and tasty.

Tara: Okay, let's go back inside or I'm going to eat all of this steak.

[Music ends. Back indoors.]

Tara: Matt, I'm so glad we got to go outside and get some grill time because I'm so excited about those kebabs now I cannot wait for them to arrive in stores.

Matt: They are just delicious.

[Light music begins.]

Tara: Let's move on. We have a bunch of new snacks coming in. First one is something that might sound a little strange to you. It is a box of crackers. They are called Strawberry & Jalapeño Crisps.

Matt: We've done a lot of these crisps and the name is innocuous. But if you think of the things that look like little tiny slices of bread and that's actually how they make these. I would love to take everybody on a factory tour of this place cause they make these like really long, but really tiny loaves of bread. And then they slice them and then they bake them a second time. So it's almost like a biscotti process. And calling them a cracker is probably a bit of a misnomer. Although the use is most like a cracker.

Tara: You can eat them straight out of the box for sure. But you can also dip them in all kinds of dips. You can put cheese on top of them.

Matt: There's like a seedy, fruity little slice of toast. It's so cute.

Tara: It's seedy, like your favorite bar. Let's test the crunch. (eating) It's very crunchy.

Matt: This just feels like it'd be perfect for lazily lounging on a lawn in the late afternoon. When you've got things that you know you should be doing, but darn it, have another

Strawberry & Jalapeño Crisp and just relax. That is what I'm talking about. It's going to be my weekend. And people will say, "What else is new? Tell me something we don't know."

[Off-mic voice.]

Ben: What else is new? Tell me something we don't know.

Tara: (giggles)

Matt: See?

Tara: Well, tell me something about something else that's a little spicy, Matt.

Matt: Well, Hatch chiles. Wonderful Hatch chiles from New Mexico from the Hatch Valley and popcorn. Two great things that now taste great together because we have a Hatch Chile Cheddar Seasoned Popcorn. And just great, great popcorn. I love popcorn.

Tara: It's chile, cheese and corn. It's almost like a tamale in popcorn.

Matt: And there are, sort of, two styles of popping corn used for most snacking popcorn. There's a mushroom or a butterfly. The mushroom is sort of like round like a Nimbus cloud and the butterfly popcorn spreads out almost like it has wings and I'll be darned if I can figure out which one this is. It's somewhere in between. It's like a fluttershroom or something. But it's great.

Tara: Which is better than a mushfly. This is really good and if I didn't watch myself, I would probably sit here and eat the whole bag. Look for it...end of June early July. That's when it should show up. I want to get to the snack that is the one I'm most looking forward to this summer. This is Carolina Gold Barbecue Ridge Cut Kettle Potato Chips. Oh my goodness. So if you've never had the Carolina Gold Barbecue Sauce from Trader Joe's, you might...first of all, you're missing out.

Matt: Yeah, it's absolutely mustard first and foremost. Carolina Gold Sauce, the classic recipe is all about mustard, molasses. It's got a great balance of sweet and acidity, but it's a sweet sauce. And in tasting different seasonings and kind of going after a version of a barbecue potato chip, we kept coming back to this sauce and this idea.

Tara: They are probably coming around the end of July.

Matt: Summertime grab it.

Tara: After all those snacks, I think I need some drinks to wash it all down with. And the best part is we have a lot of drinks to talk about. Let's start with the Sparkling Lemonade (cracking open a can).

Matt: It's lemonade o' clock somewhere.

Tara: It is right here. It says, "Contains 12% juice."

Matt: Well, if it was 100% juice , it would be 100% undrinkable.

Tara: The ingredients here are just carbonated water, sugar and lemon juice concentrate. That's it. And each can has 70 calories.

Matt: There's some serious pucker power.

Tara: If you want a sparkly cocktail, it's a great mixer. This would be really great with vodka and an additional twist of lemon. Either over ice or just, you know, chilled and straight up, almost like a sparkly lemon martini. You could rim the glass with sugar and do like a sparkly lemon drop kind of thing.

Matt: But wait, there's more.

Tara: But wait, there's more. Here's another box of 8. something ounce cans and this is Sparkling Green Tea with Pineapple Juice. And this one, by the way, has 10 calories in an 8.45 ounce can, which is pretty great.

Matt: I like how that smells.

Tara: Smells really good.

Matt: It smells like a reward after a day, like a hard workout and you're in the spa. It's like, "Good job! Here's a sparkling green tea thing."

Tara: It's incredibly refreshing.

Matt: If you're a fan of those Green Tea Mints that we have, and there are many, I think that you would quite like this because the green tea flavor is strangely similar.

Tara: Ooh, what else do we have?

Matt: We're sort of in the sparkle zone now. So this is...when are we not in the sparkle zone? Sparkling Watermelon Lemonade Water, which sounds sort of like an impossibility. If you've seen cans of sparkling water, you've seen Blueberry Lemonade we've had for a couple of years now, lots of people love that. It's in that style, in that vein. This is a Watermelon Lemonade and that is meant to describe the flavor. It's not a lemonade, so it doesn't have any sugar added. There are no calories and this is just sparkling water.

Tara: (cracking open a can) There we go. Say you're a soda drinker and you're trying to cut down on the sweet sugary stuff, the fact that there are zero calories, zero sugar, zero sweeteners of any kind in here, like no artificial sweeteners, no natural sweeteners, that's kind of shocking that that much flavor arrives into this can just with essences.

Matt: That is better living through science.

Tara: This one is super bubbly.

Matt: I have to be careful on the microphone cause it's like, okay, pardon me?

Tara: (chuckling) Right, exactly. Okay, we're down to the last product or should I say two products.

Matt: And then there was wine.

Tara: I have in front of us here, a bottle of Rosé and a bottle of Chardonnay, and they're called Lovely You and they are low calorie, zero sugar wine. As a layperson in the wine industry, I don't really understand how you make a zero sugar wine. Do you?

Matt: Well, with this, they are going to start with probably fruit that is less ripe. So in wine growing, you think about the hang time, the amount of time that grapes are on the vine. The riper they are, the more sugars there are for fermentation. So less ripe fruit will produce a lower alcohol wine. You can also take alcohol out using a centrifuge type of process. You can literally spin off different components of wine and you can pull alcohol out.

Tara: Both the Rosé and the Chardonnay are zero sugar, 100 calories and 10% alcohol. So it's a little bit lighter than a standard traditional Rosé or Chardonnay. Not that much less alcohol, but a little bit less alcohol. They're easy to drink and fun to have at a party or something like that.

[Music ends.]

Tara: I think Lovely You is a great place for us to stop, Matt, because it has been lovely sitting here with you. See what I did there?

Matt: Act as if you are.

[Closing theme music begins.]

Tara: (laughs)

Matt: Are we there yet?

Tara: We are...at the end of the summer shopping list edition of Inside Trader Joe's.

Matt: All of us here at the Trader Joe's mothership in Monrovia, California, and all of the crew members at your neighborhood Trader Joe's, we hope you have a great summer.

Tara: And we'll be back with another podcast before the season is done. So make sure to hit that free subscribe button.

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

Tara: Thanks for listening.

Matt: And thanks for listening.

[Off-mic voice.]

Ben: Thanks for listening.

Tara: (laughs)

Matt: Stop laughing.

[Music ends.]

Matt: Okay.