

Inside Trader Joe's Podcast Transcript — ICYMI: What Makes Trader Joe's Ice Cream So Special?

[Light upbeat music.]

Tara: Our crew members love to answer your questions.

Matt: They're really good at it.

Tara: They especially love questions about ice cream.

Matt: I mean, who doesn't?

Tara: This might sound self-serving, but they do get asked, "Why is Trader Joe's ice cream so good?"

Matt: It's another ICYMI, in case you missed it, Mini Episode of *Inside Trader Joe's*.

[Theme music begins with no two bells at a neighborhood Trader Joe's.]

Tara: ICYMI, why is Trader Joe's ice cream so good?

Matt: There's a good answer to that question because Trader Joe's ice cream is different from a lot of other ice creams out there. Mostly in how much of it you get. There are times when more is more, and you get more ice cream with Trader Joe's ice cream.

[Theme music ends. Light upbeat music begins.]

Tara: So I went shopping, okay? I bought three quarts of ice cream from Trader Joe's. I bought vanilla, mint chip, and coffee, three of our most popular flavors. And I went to another grocery store, and I bought a major national brand, vanilla, mint chip, and coffee, okay? Here's some differences right out of the gate. Trader Joe's is a quart. There are no quarts in the other grocery store. There are what I thought were half gallons.

Matt: Oh, but let's take a look.

Tara: But a closer look and they're not half gallons, they're 1.5 quarts.

Matt: Hmmm.

Tara: In my mind, that's a little cheater pack. Because the last time I bought ice cream like this in another grocery store, this container was a half gallon but they shrunk the container and they made it a quart and a half. So it's missing half a quart to become a half gallon, but it is bigger than our quart.

Matt: Yeah. Physically larger.

Tara: Let's talk about how ice cream is sold. Is it sold by weight or by volume?

Matt: Well, weirdly, for food, ice cream is sold by volume. It's one of the few food stuffs where it's required to be sold by volume and that's why we're talking quarts or half gallons. And it's an interesting thing because you're talking about space, and how to fill it, and that's where things get really interesting.

Tara: Right. So if you break down, a gallon of milk is a gallon of milk, is a gallon of milk, is a gallon of milk. It's going to weigh the same no matter where you get it or who's making it. It's a liquid. It fills the gallon bottle. It's the same weight. But with ice cream, depending on how you make the ice cream, what's inside will weigh vastly different amounts. So I want to do a little test. I have a food scale. I came prepared.

Matt: Food scale?

Tara: Okay? So this is Trader Joe's French Vanilla Ice Cream which is one of our all-time best-selling ice creams. We've had it for a million years. Hugely popular. This is one quart, okay? I'm putting it on a food scale.

[Drum roll.]

Tara: Okay. One pound, 14.5 ounces.

[Drum roll ends.]

Tara: So nearly two pounds. One pound...

Matt: One pound, 14....

Tara: 5.

Matt: ...5 ounces.

Tara: Right?

Matt: Okay. Got it.

Tara: One pound, 14.5 ounces. So that's one quart of vanilla ice cream from Trader Joe's. Now, here's the national brand, quart and a half. I'm going to put it on the scale.

[Drum roll.]

Tara: One pound, 13 ounces.

[Drum roll ends.]

Matt: Hmm.

Tara: Bigger container. It weighs less. It costs way more money, by the way. I shopped at a regular grocery store, paid the regular price. I shopped at Trader Joe's, paid the regular price. Our vanilla ice cream is \$4.49. This ice cream from a major brand, from a regular other

supermarket, significantly more expensive than \$4.49. And yet, you're getting less ice cream. Why is that? How does that happen?

[Music transition.]

Matt: Well, I think we have to start with thinking about something else that goes through a physical change: whipped cream. So when you make whipped cream, to go from that liquid cream state to the fluffy whipped cream state, you're introducing air and it's a physical change. That whipping is integrating air into the cream and it kind of puffs it up and that's what's happening with ice cream as well. So ice cream, if you didn't have any air whipped into it, it would be like a frozen block. It would be really difficult to scoop and maybe even difficult to eat. So some amount of air is whipped into ice creams. It can be any amount of air and this air is known in the industry as overrun. If you have something that has an overrun of 50%, it means that you have 50% more volume. So overrun is also sort of a reflection of volume. So if you had a quart of ice cream or the ingredients to make a quart and you whipped enough air to make one and a half quarts of ice cream, that's an overrun of 50%. And this is tricky because again, ice cream being sold by volume, not by weight. Well, if you have a heavier, denser product with less air in it, it has more of the good things, the great ingredients in it, and you can really tell when you eat it. There's that creaminess. That level of density is felt differently. Now, sometimes a nice, light, whipped frozen dessert is great, but ice cream to be called ice cream must meet certain requirements. Trader Joe's ice cream, when we say super premium, that's not just us puffing up our ice cream shirts. This is an actual industry term, and it has to do with the amount of overrun. It's got to be really below 30%, usually between 20 and 25%. And it has to do with how much butterfat is in there. And for ice cream, butterfats are really key, an important aspect. It's that richness.

Tara: I want to just for fun, I want to weigh the other ones.

Matt: It's like a wrestling match. It's the weigh-in before the big match.

Tara: Totally. I'm going to weigh our mint chip ice cream which is labeled super premium.

Matt: Okay. And that's in a quart.

Tara: That's in a quart.

[Drum roll.]

Tara: It's a little bit heavier than the vanilla even. It's one pound, 15 ounces.

[Drum roll ends.]

Matt: It stands for reason, because chocolate chips are heavy.

Tara: Right?

Matt: One pound, 15 ounces?

Tara: Yeah.

Matt: Okay.

Tara: And here comes the quart and a half of the national brand. Ready for this?

Matt: Drum roll please.

[Drum roll.]

Tara: One pound, 10.8 ounces.

[Drum roll ends.]

Matt: Wow.

Tara: Yeah.

Matt: Wow.

Tara: I mean, there's so much air in here. Our mint chip ice cream has like 25, 26% overrun. So I got to imagine this one has 50 or more percent overrun, because it's so light.

Matt: Yeah. You can actually get up to 100% overrun...

Tara: Crazy.

Matt: ...where you can double the volume by whipping air into it for sure.

Tara: Well, it feels so different. All right. Now, I'm going to do the coffee. Coffee Bean Blast, one of my all-time favorites, Trader Joe's quart...

[Drum roll.]

Matt: Such an amazing product.

Tara: One pound, 14.9 ounces.

[Drum roll ends.]

Tara: So right about the same.

Matt: One pound, 14.9. Okay.

Tara: Yeah. And then...

Matt: Big national brand.

Tara: ...big national brand, quart and a half.

[Drum roll.]

Tara: One pound, 12.5.

[Drum roll ends.]

Tara: They are all significantly lighter for a larger container. If I'm going to eat ice cream, I want the good stuff.

Matt: Absolutely.

Tara: I don't want to waste my time on airy, not very rich ice cream, because it's a treat and I want to be treated. I also think the price is a staggering difference. Yes, the container is a little smaller, but there is so much more actual ice cream inside of our container. And yet, our prices, they're all \$4.49. All of the ones we've spoken about, the French Vanilla, the Coffee Bean Blast, and the Mint Chip. And the national brand in a supermarket, significantly more expensive on all the flavors.

Matt: Sometimes this difference manifests itself in the difficulty of scooping the ice cream. Now, we didn't talk about our way, our chocolate core of ice cream. That is notoriously challenging to scoop because of its production method. It's so heavy and dense. It's wonderful. So you do have to let it temper. You have to let it get a little bit warm to do a decent job scooping or you get a little bit of a workout. That's why it's physically different than those lighter than air, whipped ice creams, or frozen desserts that you see out in the larger marketplace.

[Music transition.]

Tara: If you want to see the difference, if you really want to see it, buy our vanilla ice cream. Buy another vanilla ice cream in a supermarket. Put a couple scoops of each into a bowl and see how quickly they melt. The one with the higher overrun, the one with more air whipped into it, melts so fast. Like almost as soon as you scoop it into the bowl, it's melting. Ours, it takes a while. It sits in that bowl, and it holds its shape. It holds its consistency for a pretty good long time. I love our ice cream. I'm constantly impressed with the quality in every container of ice cream that we sell and we sell a lot of ice cream.

Matt: We do.

Tara: But I think people are sometimes fooled by the size of a container and they think, "Oh, I'm getting a better deal here, because there's so much more in it." There isn't any more in it. In fact, there's less.

[Transition to closing.]

Tara: I'm Tara Miller. Thanks for listening to this special ICYMI episode.

Matt: And I'm Matt Sloan and thanks for listening. ICYMI, in case you missed it.

Tara: That's why Trader Joe's ice cream is so good.