

# Inside Trader Joe's Podcast Transcript — ICYMI: Product Names

*[Light upbeat music begins.]*

Matt: A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

Tara: Romeo and Juliet Act 2, Scene 2.

Matt: Oh, you looked that up.

Tara: Maybe.

Matt: But would a Trader Joe's product by any other name taste as sweet?

Tara: Ah, yes. To be or not to be a topic for a podcast episode? That is the question.

Matt: Hamlet Act 3, Scene 1, and yes, let's make this an ICYMI, in case you missed it, Episode of *Inside Trader Joe's*.

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

Tara: ICYMI, how does Trader Joe's name its products, and do product names matter?

Matt: Very carefully, and yes.

*[Theme music ends. Light upbeat music begins.]*

Tara: Some things at Trader Joe's have names that just sound like what they are, so...

Matt: Very descriptive.

Tara: Very descriptive. Things like Cauliflower Gnocchi. That tells you it's a little pillow pasta type thing, but it's made with cauliflower. Very straightforward. Sometimes we go a little fanciful, we go a little whimsical, like Hold the Cone! Ice Cream Cones. It tells you what it is, but it also, it's like, hold the cone. Why is it called that? We take the whole process of naming our products pretty seriously, and oftentimes, going really straightforward makes the most sense. Mandarin Orange Chicken, for example. You know what's in that bag. When we decide to do something a little bit different, what's the 'why' behind that?

Matt: I guess essentially, we believe that grocery shopping can be fun, that it does not have to be a chore. And when you bring the things that you buy from your Trader Joe's home, we'd love to extend that experience to your cupboard, to your freezer. So maybe you open the pantry, and you see that This Strawberry Walks Into A Bar. That's on purpose.

Tara: Right. So that's a couple of decades ago.

Matt: Yeah, it's been a while now.

Tara: Yeah, I think that we've sold that product, which is ostensibly a strawberry-filled cereal bar, we sold that product for a really long time. There's nothing super exciting about it,

there's nothing truly innovative about it. It's just really good and we sell it at a great price. So I think the thinking internally was let's make it sound like fun, because it is fun, and it's different than saying, "I want a strawberry cereal bar." It's like, "I want This Strawberry Walks Into A Bar," and that led to a whole line of those products, so there's This Apple Walks Into A Bar, there's This Pumpkin Walks Into A Bar in the fall, a whole bunch of different options.

Matt: Absolutely. And so we took the opportunity to set up a cereal bar with the opening of a joke, and then we spin off that These Peanuts Go On A Date in a bar or These Sprinkles Walk Into A Cookie. We're even riffing on our own joke. Hopefully, someone somewhere gets this.

*[Music transition.]*

Tara: It's fun. It makes your grocery shopping a little more fun. You're walking down an aisle, and you are in front of a refrigerated case, and you see a package of something called Avocado's Number Guacamole. What the heck is that about? And then you read the package, and you realize that we named it that because it has so many avocados in every product, and Avogadro's number is this ginormous never ending number.

Matt: So we thought, what a fun opportunity, and we couldn't resist that little bit of a pun, a play on words. And sometimes the plays on words, well, they're just getting at the reason for being. Take a long-standing type of chocolate bar, Pound Plus. Trader Joe's Pound Plus Bars have been around for decades. Why are they called pound plus? Well, they're from Europe and the measurement system is metric, and it's a standard, not normal retail size chocolate bar. It's 500 grams, but 500 grams in the standard American way of measuring comes out to 17.6 ounces, so it's a little more than a pound. You get a pound plus 1.6 ounces of chocolate.

Tara: I will take that Pound Plus Bar any day. I think some of the other more fun and yet descriptive product names, I was thinking about this, Midnight Moo, which is Trader Joe's version of chocolate syrup. Perhaps its most common use is to make chocolate milk, so it's like a dark milk. Midnight Moo, you're getting the milk from a cow. There's a whimsical cow on the label of the product. Everybody in my house just calls chocolate syrup Midnight Moo.

Matt: So sometimes, we are almost inventing a name for a category of things or just having a bit of fun with something that might be new to us, but we didn't necessarily invent. So whether it's Unexpected Cheddar or Synergistically Seasoned Popcorn, that's just us having a little bit of fun. Sometimes the fun can come from just being very plain. Just Mango Slices are just mango slices. These are dried mangoes, unsulfured, unsweetened, and that name is exactly descriptive of what they are.

Tara: We did that with something else. It's a bag of soft chewy candy that we call Just The Lobsters, and it's literally just that. It's the lobster shaped candies from the Scandinavian Swimmers bag. They're the red ones, and that's the one that everyone seems to like the most, so we have occasionally a bag of Just The Lobsters available.

Matt: It's like the center cut of the tenderloin in Scandinavian Swimmers terms, Just The Lobsters.

Tara: Everyone knew what they were getting, right? They saw the bag, they see the shape. "Oh, that's from the Scandinavian Swimmers bag. I love those lobsters."

Matt: Sometimes descriptive names, or descriptors as they're known in the industry, can go on and on like Chili & Lime Flavored Rolled Corn Tortilla Chips. Well, we said what was in the bag and it seemed to work okay.

*[Music transition.]*

Tara: Another sort of whimsical name, but also very descriptive name that happened here, I don't know, probably close to 10 years ago now was Everything But The Bagel Seasoning. It's ubiquitous now.

Matt: And that's a twist on a classic, not Trader Joe's invented idea of the Everything Bagel. It's just all the seasoning bits except for the bagel.

Tara: But we took that idea and we kept going with it, so over time, we've had the Everything But The Elote Seasoning, which is all the flavors that are on a classic elote or esquites corn. And in the fall season, we have Everything But The Leftovers Seasoning, which is like a riff on Thanksgiving dinner in a jar. It's fantastic.

Matt: Or easy to use, ready-to-drink cocktails, where you have Everything But The Bartender.

Tara: Yes. And those are really, really good. And those are available where we sell spirits obviously. We have a margarita, we have a Cosmopolitan, we have a couple of additional ones coming at some point in the future, so that's something that is continuing to happen. That really is meant to be descriptive. You don't need the bartender here. We've done all that work for you, so you have everything you need. I love that.

*[Music transition.]*

Tara: All right, Matt, we've talked about a lot of product names. Here's the question though. How do we come to these names? How does that happen?

Matt: Well, someone working on a project, developing a product, could actually have a very crystal clear name in mind and they work to deliver a product that meets that name. Or sometimes, oftentimes, there are conversations along the way in development through and at the tasting panel where we almost workshop amongst ourselves an idea to say, "Man, those are giant olives. Those might be the world's largest queen Saviano olives," and then it sticks from days long past, and that might lead us to the World's Puffiest White Cheddar Corn Puffs. To be fair, Guinness hasn't checked in with us on this, but we think they're great and we think they live up to that moniker, but it's really just us coming up with ideas to make something noticeable, and hopefully to pique someone's curiosity, to get them to try something and to have a bit of fun themselves.

Tara: So you just talked about the world's largest, and I'm going to go to the other end of the spectrum and talk about Teeny Tiny Avocados.

Matt: Shrinking things is fun.

Tara: We found an opportunity years ago to bring in these little, tiny avocados that were single-serve size, no waste. No concern about your avocado leftovers going bad before you had a chance to eat them. The Teeny Tiny Avocados have been hugely popular with our

customers, so when our product developers came up with these little pies that were kind of like hand pies but not quite as big as a turnover, well, Teeny Tiny Pies seemed to just make perfect sense.

Matt: That idea that works well for us, theme and variation, where we have an idea and we see where else it's applicable, how else it fits, and this variation on a name, a theme that you see repeating in a few places around the store, we like to do that. It's fun for us.

Tara: We do like to do that.

Matt: And sometimes, there are actually regulatory requirements here where we have to use the standard of identity. But rather than saying, "Here's this thing that's kind of like sushi, but not exactly. You can eat it warm." We just use the Korean word Kimbap.

*[Music transition.]*

Matt: Now admittedly, there are different ways to pronounce that, so we had to do some research and understand what the most generally accepted phonetic form as spelled with our alphabet might be. Kimbap or speculoos, Speculoos Cookie Butter, or a spatchcock chicken, those are real words. We didn't make them up. They might be new to you. They were new to me at some point too, and it's great to keep learning.

Tara: It's great to keep learning. It's great to enjoy yourself when you're shopping for groceries. The entire ethos of Trader Joe's is we'd like you to enjoy yourself while you're shopping for groceries. We'd like you to enjoy yourself while you're eating what you've shopped for at Trader Joe's at home.

Matt: Absolutely. Among the joys of being here is taking part in great food.

Tara: And if putting a fun name or even a really strangely long descriptive name of a product on the package helps you find a little bit of fun in your grocery shopping experience, we're all for that.

*[Transition to closing music.]*

Tara: I'm Tara Miller. Thanks for listening.

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

Tara: That's how Trader Joe's comes up with product names.