Inside Trader Joe’s Podcast Transcript — Episode 115: Journey to Ireland with Trader Joe’s for Chocolate and Caramel

[Light upbeat music begins.]

Tara: Hey, Matt, do you and your family hang a wreath on your door during the holidays?

Matt: We do a winter greens wreath for that nice December time. Yeah, we really do like that.

Tara: Yeah, same here. And did you know that hanging a holly wreath is a tradition that is believed to have begun in Ireland?

Matt: I didn't know that. The Irish holiday tradition that I love is eating Trader Joe's Dark Chocolate Sea Salt Caramels.

Tara: Oh, well, that's I think more of an American tradition, but, okay, they are made in Ireland. And with the holidays now upon us, they're back on the shelves at your neighborhood Trader Joe's and they are so good.

Matt: Recently, we flew to the dark chocolate sea salt caramel factory just outside of Dublin.

Tara: Go ahead and say it.

Matt: And boy are my arms tired.

[Rimshot.]

Tara: While we were there, we found out about some new chocolatey holiday traditions they're working on with our Trader Joe's development team.

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

[Theme music begins with two bells 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 culture and innovation guy at Trader Joe's. Yes, I'll admit, I get sentimental about the holiday products that return to our stores this time of year.

Tara: Sometimes, the people who work with us to make those products, they get a bit sentimental too.

[Airplane landing. Closing theme music ends. Transition to upbeat music.]

Tara: Matt, we are in one of my happy places, a chocolate factory.

Matt: It's a good place to be.

Tara: And in Ireland, another one of my happy places.

Matt: Two for two.

Tara: Can we get each of you to just introduce yourselves?

Michelle: I am Michelle, and I am the managing director.

[Transition to upbeat Irish music.]

Denise: I'm Denise, and I work in sales.

James: Yeah, and I'm James. I work in operations.

Matt: Why this kind of product here?

Tara: Can we talk about the origin story?

Denise: Yes.

Matt: It feels like there's some very Irish story that might just be happenstance that it's like, "Oh, the dairy was here, and the caramels came from this oversupply of cream we had one year." I don't know.

Rooms: (laughter)

Matt: There's something that obviously started really small and has been built up carefully.

Michelle: Go ahead, Denise.

Denise: My memory, how we started is it's Marianne. Marianne loved Trader Joe's. All she ever wanted to do was supply Trader Joe's. (laughs) We were at a trade show in Chicago. And lo and behold, who walked down the aisle, only one of the buyers saw the name on the badge, and Marianne grabbed a tray of chocolate, and chased her down the aisle and got her to taste some chocolates. And that's where it actually all began.

Michelle: The essence of Marianne was, apart from being the most effervescent person you would ever come across, is nothing was ever no. It was always, "Well, we can do it if we want to do it."

Denise: And then we launched our first box of chocolates into Trader Joe's in 2004.

Tara: Which was?

Denise: It was a desserts collection. Yeah. A desserts collection in a square box.

Michelle: Yeah.

Denise: Then it just took off. We worked closely with the team. We were constantly innovating, and working, and, as you say, trying products. It would work. It wouldn't work. And here we are, years later, still producing lovely chocolates for your lovely customers.

Michelle: But the key was we never could compromise…

Denise: On quality.

Michelle: ... on quality and flavor. So if you wanted something that tasted like strawberry, it needed to be strawberry, not half strawberry. We want the best quality ingredients, the best chocolate recipe that we could afford, the best cocoa content, the most natural ingredients that we could afford. Because as Marianne... we went on, it was all about making sure that we kept natural, natural flavors, natural ingredients.

[Music transition.]

Tara: What you've produced for us over the last 20 plus years has just continued to evolve. It's not just been one thing. Customers will like this for a while. There's this sense of excitement when there's something new. It doesn't mean that what's there is no longer good. It's just not as exciting anymore. So let's rotate in something new, add some excitement. And then maybe a few years later, that gets a little boring again too.

Denise: Absolutely.

Tara: So then it's let's find something new that will interest people. I think palettes change. People's tastes change. Those kinds of things evolve. And sometimes, you're hitting a trend. Sometimes, you're starting a trend. Sometimes, you come in too early with a flavor that people don't really understand yet. But 10 years later, that flavor is really going to hit and be the next big thing. And you're sitting there thinking, "But I had this flavor 10 years ago. (girls laughs) What took you so long?"

Michelle: And I think the relationship has really driven innovation here because, A, we had to always be watching what was going on. So we would have the trend presentations. We would have the insights. It's probably more readily available now with the internet, and Instagram, and TikTok.

Denise: Yeah.

Michelle: You see the trends way quicker now than we would've done maybe 15, 20 years ago.

Denise: Oh, absolutely.

Tara: People are much more in the moment. It's hard to really get a sense of, is this a lasting trend?

Denise: Absolutely.

Tara: Or is this just this week?

Michelle: Your innovation cycle needs to be really, really fast to be able to ride that one, or do you see how it develops and maybe get on a longer term lower trend?

Matt: Yeah.

Denise: Collections come and go, but what is the next salted caramel? Because that was developed and is still here 20 odd years later. So everybody is looking for what's the next big thing, 20-year product.

Tara: Right.

Matt: And there's something exciting is exciting, but stable is wonderful.

Tara: Mm-hmm.

Denise: And trust, I think it's very important that your customers trust that product. They look forward to it.

Michelle: The trend thing is important though, Denise, because you need to be demonstrating innovation. So while it might inform the mainstay of your value sales, still want your customer coming in saying, "What's next? What have you done for us now? How are you combining flavors, textures?" There will be a few people that just don't like the blend of textures. The Pumpkin Caramel that we did, that was one internally was an absolute marmite product. You either loved it or it was, "I'm not touching that."

Tara: Yeah. I thought everybody loved marmite.

Denise: No.

Tara: Just joking. (laughs)

Denise: Yeah. Pumpkin is an unusual one because I think…

Michelle: We're not a pumpkin society.

Denise: No, definitely not.

Michelle: It was always a challenging flavor, but we used to bring it into the boardroom for board meetings, and you would have one director would go, "Give me that box over here," and everybody else would go, "Give me a salted caramel." But if we can blend the innovation with the tried and tested, that's the winning.

Tara: That's kind of our whole business model, because we have products that we've had for 35 years. It's the innovation that drives the excitement that gets people interested. People who might not have walked into a Trader Joe's come in because of something innovative they've heard about. Those who are already shopping with us every day. They happen upon the innovative things as part of their shopping experience. We exist on innovation. I think that's where we really thrive.

Matt: We have an unusually high level of churn among the products. Very few things stick and last as long as the salted caramels have. So that's amazing because things only stick and last if customers want them.

Denise: Stick and last. I want more stick and last.

Matt: Yes. Yeah. We often have a store that will say, "Oh, we're having the 20th anniversary of the store. What are the things that we sold 20 years ago that are exciting now?" It's like, "Not much. Almonds or a can of corn." Fine, but customers come to see what's new.

Denise: Yes.

Michelle: That's quite an innovation pipeline then from a Trader Joe's point of view.

Tara: We have that group of people developing products. They're going around the world. They're going around the states. They're talking to people everywhere and looking at new things. It's just constant.

Denise: And that's where that was developed.

Tara: That's the Apple Crisp.

Denise: The apple. Yeah.

Tara: That's the one that we have just had for the fall season.

Denise: That's right. I met Allie in Amsterdam, and we had a chat, and she tasted a few chocolates. And slowly but surely, that product stemmed from there.

Tara: We talked about that in a recent episode of this podcast that came out in September. Hopefully, folks have had a chance to try that and enjoy them during the fall.

Matt: Hopefully, they're all gone.

Denise: Hopefully they are all gone.

Tara: Well, that's true.

Denise: That's absolutely.

Tara: That's true.

Michelle: Always good when we hear a product selling.

Denise: Yes, yes. When you work so hard on a new product, a new collection, and you see it on the shelf, it's just such a fantastic feeling to have developed that from nothing. And here it is, a finished product, and people are going to enjoy it. It's very rewarding, very rewarding.

Tara: You think we could head outside to the factory? We'd love a tour.

Denise: Great. Let's do it.

Matt: We could do that.

[Music transition. Outside noise. Birds chirping, sheep bleating. Machinery noise as they enter factory.]

Michelle: There is all around the ingredients coming in the door, all the packaging coming in the door, and then everything go back out the door. So the door here is against one door. So it's all in and out, in and out. We could have seven troops a day coming in and going out.

Tara: And they all have to get by the sheep first. (sheep bleating) We met the sheep this morning. Yes. They let us through.

Denise: They let you through.

Tara: After a minute.

Denise: You know they have right of way.

Tara: Yes, we stopped.

Denise: Yeah.

Michelle: So when the weather turns bad now, as we get into November, December, they'll make an attempt to come up for shelter.

James: A couple of years ago, there seemed to be a lot less sheep than normal. And there's a couple of houses there, and they always have their gates locked. And this guy had this lovely garden, like loads of plants, flowers, everything. His gate was open, and all you could see was this little white sheep inside munching away.

Group: (laughs)

Michelle: Feasting.

James: I'd say when he came back, all his pruning was done. Everything was done. He didn't have to worry about anything.

Group: (continuing laughing)

[Loud machinery.]

James: So what we'll do is we'll enter the warehouse. We'll go in here.

Tara: Oh, it smells good already.

Michelle: Hey, you guys can smell the chocolate. We don't smell it anymore.

Tara: You just acclimate so quickly to whatever you're smelling. But yeah, as soon as we hit that corridor, I could smell the chocolate.

Denise: Yeah. Good morning.

Alona: Good morning. Alona, warehouse manager.

Denise: Looks after all the shipments to Trader Joe's. So she books the transport. She coordinates it from here right to your DCs all over America.

Tara: Distribution centers.

Denise: Yes. And she does it seamlessly. Yes.

Tara: That's gotten a little more complicated over the years.

Alona: So it was a little bit challenging maybe at the first year or two, but then I get to know Trader Joe's. So we build a good relationship.

James: In Alona's time that she's been here, a lot of challenges in that.

Alona: What was it? 2022? We couldn't get containers from anywhere.

Tara: That was a huge problem. I remember that.

Michelle: And then everything was backlogged in the States. So we were sitting outside and at the port for, I think one of them sat for 40 days.

Alona: Sixty days, actually.

Denise: Michelle was…

Michelle: Sixty days.

Tara: That's burned into your memory.

Group: (laughs)

Denise: You can tell that that was painful.

Alona: Sixty days.

James: So there's a lot of stuff going around in the world that make logistics complicated. She's done a great job.

Tara: Thank you.

Matt: Wonderful.

Alona: You're welcome.

Matt: Thank you.

Tara: It's nice to talk with you.

Alona: You too.

[Beeping sound of a forklift backing up.]

Tara: Mind the forklift.

Michelle: That area there is all sweets. So we've two main production lines. So we can make two sweets at a time predominantly. So if you've got six flavors, you have six production runs before you can pack a box of chocolate. So we've got all the sweets storage here.

[Music transition.]

Tara: Oh wow.

Denise: Now, this is Sam.

[Loud factory noises.]

Samantha: Hi. I'm Samantha. I'm the production manager. I'll show you how we make the sweet. So first we put in our mold. So our mold, it's heated.

Tara: Okay. I wish we could show all this on the podcast, but we brought microphones, not cameras.

[Tape fast forwarding.]

Samantha: So we fill in our first chocolate bill here, okay? It comes through here, and then it's vibrated, okay? It's turned here. So this creates our shell. This girl here then does the sprinkles which is a vibration. So we put our sprinkle on the sweet.

James: Did you get all that?

Tara: Nope.

Samantha: We do make loads of our Trader Joe's sweets on this line.

[Music transition.]

Matt: And next stop, it looks like the research and development lab.

Tara: I bet our product development team has visited this place often.

Barbara: We're in the kitchen now at the moment, and this is where all the magic begins for Trader Joe's.

Tara: Hi, Barbara. Nice to meet you.

Barbara: Hi, Tara. Hi, Matt.

Denise: Barbara's with us 27 years.

Michelle: She's great.

Denise: Her technical knowledge of the factory and ingredients, it's amazing.

Tara: So you are in charge of R&D. That must be fun.

Barbara: Well, there's a team of us. I have Rory. I have Sharon. We also have a development chef that we use from time to time with trends across the globe really. We get our heads together and see what we can come up with. It starts with kind of a baby recipe. We make it up here in the kitchen and then we deposit it into a shell. We could make up to, I suppose, 10 to 14 recipes at a time. We leave them set for a couple of days, and then we do the tasting session. That's when really we tear it apart to make sure that we're happy with the taste profile, the crunch, the texture, and the sensorial experience that the customer will ultimately get when they buy it off shelf.

Tara: Matt and I are part of the tasting panel at Trader Joe's. And oftentimes when we taste something, we'll be told "This is a benchtop sample." Well, this is the bench.

Denise: Yeah.

Tara: That's really interesting. What are the trends that you're seeing? Anything that is really like, "Oh, wow, that's new and different"?

Barbara: Matcha is a big trend at the moment. It's driven by the Gen Zs, and they're big into their health and all that sort of stuff.

Tara: They want to have wellness and chocolate at the same time.

Barbara: Yes, exactly. So that pairs quite well with fruit flavors. So we've developed a Strawberry Matcha Chocolate here, and we're hoping that that will hit the right note. There's some here for everybody to taste if you'd like to do that.

Tara: Great.

Barbara: Within the US, our development chef has targeted Japanese cheesecake as being an up and coming trend, particularly with Asian style desserts, and they seem to be taking over in the US at the moment.

[Music transition.]

Barbara: Obviously, pistachio driven by the... viraled by chocolate, although that trend seems to have dropped off a bit, pistachio is now becoming a staple. It will be there for the long haul, but not in that format.

Michelle: We couldn't sell a pistachio sweet here two, three years ago. Nobody wanted to taste it. Whereas now, it's become the norm.

Tara: So the Dubai chocolate opened the door to people realizing, "Oh, pistachio tastes good with chocolate."

Matt: We've seen more and more people, I don't know if they're just owning up to enjoying milk chocolate, but it felt like for a long time it was like you weren't a grownup if you liked milk chocolate. I love milk chocolate.

Tara: It's the best.

Matt: I love dark chocolate too. So it is exciting to see that, that we've got a little more room to play with.

Tara: I also think people are right now much more interested in extreme flavor profiles, at least in the States. Very sour, very spicy, very sweet. Those extremes of flavor are much more acceptable and even desirable than they were five or 10 years ago.

Barbara: Another trend that's up and coming is hot honey. So that seems to be going down well with the millenniums. I can't say that. And the Gen Zs as well.

Tara: Yeah. And the Gen X.

Michelle: And it's appearing everywhere. It's not just in chocolate. It's pizza with hot honey. It's salads with hot honey. It's just everywhere.

Tara: We have a Hot Honey Popcorn. We have hot honey…a bunch of things.

Barbara: So we've paired it with caramel, and it is excellent.

Denise: These are actually all on their way as we speak over to the team for a tasting. So yeah, you're actually going to taste them first.

Tara: I'm going to try the Strawberry Matcha.

Matt: Well, and there's such a trend with matcha. Now, there's not enough matcha. I mean, everyone's chasing the supply, and it's like it's almost as long as it's green, it's fine, which is strange. There's a flavor that's so particular to that tea that it's not for everybody. But if it's missing, then it's not that thing at all. So it's interesting balancing.

Barbara: A lot of the tasting sessions that we do recently, we actually taste them blind. So we just give them a number. We all sit in silence, write down your own notes and whatever, and then we discuss it at the end because you are... if somebody tells you it's a strawberry matcha, you're automatically going, "Okay. I know it's that." But the real test is to give you a sweet and say, "You tell me what it is." So we have great fun with that. Sometimes, we get it right. And sometimes, we don't. (laughs)

Denise: Sometimes, we don't.

Matt: Sure.

Tara: Matcha generally is not for me because it's too grassy for me.

Matt: I like it because it tastes like you just mowed the lawn.

Tara: The opposite palette right here. But I tend to like it if it's mixed with other things in the right way. I thought the matcha would overpower the strawberry, but they really do balance. You still get the matcha, but it's definitely strawberry forward with matcha. That appeals to me.

Barbara: Yeah.

Matt: Lemon and Lavender Dark Chocolate.

Barbara: The lavender is on a floral side of things. And within the US as well, I think you're seeing a trend with more floral type flavors coming into patisserie as well as chocolates as well as bakery products. Lavender can be quite strong on its own and very overpowering. So here when it's paired with a citrus flavor, it's giving you that balance, and you should be getting both flavors coming through.

[Music transition.]

Michelle: We're always looking to push the boundaries. The thing we need to remember is there's a consumer at the end. We had an interesting experience where we developed sweets for a collection maybe 10 years ago. But we had a sweet in it, which was the raspberry and pink peppercorn and white chocolate. And we loved it. It was out there. It was a fabulous flavor, and we put it to consumer testing, and it was like marmite. It was like, no.

Tara: Really?

Michelle: Yeah. So we have to be careful. We're very close to it.

Matt: Because you're necessarily always looking for something different because the baseline is sort of passe almost for you. But some of it's a cycle that you have to enter the cycle at the right time. And I think pink peppercorns are on the ascendancy. We have a brand new cheese. It's a very mild fontina, and it's rubbed with pink peppercorns. It's really interesting. It's nice. Something like that could totally work in this application.

Tara: It's really like a revisit. Just because it didn't work 10 years ago, it doesn't mean it wouldn't work now.

Barbara: You weren't brave enough to chance the hot honey at the end. I'm glad you didn't start with that because obviously when you're doing your taste panels as well, it's important that you do it in the right format.

Tara: With the heat.

Barbara: Yeah.

Matt: I think it's better than most... I think the honey flavor is as present as the spice, which is unusual because most of the hot honeys, they use the most innocuous honey. It's just sweet. It has no other flavor. That's really good.

Tara: I like that the heat just comes in at the end.

Matt: I think that one's ready for prime time.

Tara: But I like a lot of heat.

Matt: I think that has broad enough appeal.

Tara: Yeah. I'm a little too spicy.

Matt: I think that would be ready as is personally.

Barbara: The trend now is this swicy?

Tara: Swicy. So you always have the sweet because it's chocolate based, right?

Denise: It's a very deceptive sweet because like that, I'm tasting it, and I'm going, "Where's the heat? Where's the heat? Where's the heat?" And then boom, there's the heat.

Tara: Yep.

Denise: We do have the ultimate taste test in the factory, which is when they've made a bunch of R&D samples, we'll put them into the offices, and we'll monitor what's gone and what stays.

Tara: Yeah.

Matt: If something is free and no one still wants to eat it, you know that we've got to go back and rework.

Tara: We've actually had that situation happen where something has come to our tasting panel, and extras have gone into our kitchen just for everyone. And no one eats it. And we have to rethink approving that product.

Barbara: Sometimes, you will notice a difference between kitchen samples and then when we go to mainstream production, the texture of the filling can change slightly because you're obviously scaling it up.

Matt: How do you scale up uniqueness? Are they opposite ideas?

Barbara: I think for the consumer, I know when I'd open a box of chocolates, I don't like them all to look exactly the same. I think particularly with chocolates, it's an artisan type of feel if you're buying a chocolate. And while we endeavor to stick to a specification, there is a little bit of a tolerance there with sprinkles because I think that's what makes it pop and makes it unique. Particularly if you're going to a dinner party and you're putting out a box of chocolates for your guests, I think it's nice to have a variety there.

Denise: Things that give a uniqueness, you've seen it outside on the line where we hand sprinkle. Well, you're not going to get five pieces on every chocolate. You might get four on one and six on another, but over the box, it'll balance out. That is handcrafted.

Michelle: Yeah.

Barbara: And I think that's important. I suppose a question for yourself in terms of your taste panels, do you do it any different to what we do here in terms of setting up and discussing what you like?

Matt: Yeah.

Tara: Yeah. It's all different.

Matt: It works well for us. It's far less scientific.

Tara: Our threshold for approving a product is very high. It takes a very high percentage of the people in the room to say yes.

Matt: It has to be eight out of 10. We have to have an 80% yes vote to move forward.

Tara: And we're really trying to represent our customers and not just ourselves. So some things I don't like at all. I don't like anchovies, for example. So if we are tasting anchovies, I have to take the word of other people in the group who do like anchovies to say, "Oh, yeah, this is a great representation of that."

Denise: But I think that's the strength in having a team, and we would have the same thing here. You do have preferences. You do have flavors that don't sit well with you, some that you really love.

Matt: So when you go out to a restaurant, what do you order for dessert?

Barbara: I actually don't order dessert. Would you believe that?

Matt: I do.

Tara: She's eating dessert all day long.

Barbara: And I'm generally a bit disappointed. So I stick to the starter and main course.

Matt: Okay. Yeah, just better to order the French fries.

Tara: (laughs)

Matt: I think about Allison who manages the candy business for us. I think she's the same way. I mean, she eats so much candy for work. She doesn't eat candy when she's not working.

Barbara: I can drop some up to the boardroom if you want to taste a few more.

Matt: Yeah. On the three that I tasted, I have no notes, seriously. I think they're really good.

Tara: Did you try this one?

Matt: I didn't. I need to maintain my figure. So I'll have it now.

[Music transition.]

Matt: It's been a wonderful treat to see the treats actually made because I know that I probably take it for granted that these are just amazing when I open the box. But so much work goes into this, into every single piece.

James: If you look on the floor, say you met Kathleen who's here.

Michelle: Thirty years.

James: Thirty years. You met Sam that's here two years. Okay. You met Alona that's here seven years. Now seven years sounds like a long time, but seven years you're considered new still.

Michelle: (laughs)

James: But there's a mix of people, and you've a mix of age profile as well where you have younger people coming up in the business. You have people here that have been longer. They're still young, but they've been here longer like Kathleen and things like that.

Denise: Careful now, James. (laughs)

James: There's a generational thing happening as well. And I think the new people that are coming on board feed off the enthusiasm of the older people, but they also bring to change and to evolve because we can't stand still. So that's the company changing and growing and the people changing and growing with it.

Michelle: When you've got so many people in the building for so long, you do look and say, "There's a risk here that the knowledge and experience and everything else will eventually retire out of the business." So you have to bring that next generation.

Matt: I think what was so evident was with this range of experience and background, what was consistent was the enthusiasm and the excitement. And it's one thing to be excited when you're brand new. It's another to be excited 30 years in.

Tara: They were all really proud of the work. They all took the opportunity to call out other people.

Denise: Yeah. We're a team. We really are.

Michelle: We're all very enthusiastic. (laughs)

Denise: A bit too much sometimes. (laughs)

Michelle: Too much at times. We can be quite passionate about things.

[Music transition.]

Tara: Maybe we should cap this off with the specific products that we will have this holiday season coming from here.

Denise: We have our beautiful Dark Chocolate Collection.

Tara: It is beautiful.

Denise: Yeah, it is.

Tara: It's very elegant looking.

Denise: It is very elegant. Absolutely. So this is a collection of 16 chocolates, all dark. So that's back again. We have our Sea Salted Caramels available.

Tara: Classic.

Denise: Classic. And then we have the little taster pack as well, which does really well, the little gift pack.

Tara: So that's the gift card holder pack.

Denise: Yeah, or it's a small little gift with the bottle of lovely Merlot.

Tara: There's a little slot in the box where you could slide in a gift card if you wanted to buy someone a gift card and then use this as the carrier of the gift card, which I think is great.

Denise: It's a great one. Brilliant. So that's lovely. And we do have some exciting stuff we're launching in March next year coming as well. I don't know if you have been told about that.

Matt: Are those the little bugs?

Denise: The little bugs.

Tara: The little bugs. Oh, yeah.

Denise: The little spring bugs. Yes.

Tara: Those are cute.

Denise: So they're coming in March. That's exciting because that's new. It's a lovely little four pack of bugs.

Tara: Just solid chocolate.

Denise: Solid milk chocolate. It's just a fun little item. Yes. It's more probably a children's item.

Michelle: And then we're actively working on the innovation projects for 2027.

James: I drive my kids crazy because it's one of those things working here. I'm insane.

Denise: I actually love it, James.

James: Where essentially I am making seasonal products early. So that Christmas product over there, I'll go to my kids in July, August, I'll go, “Happy Christmas.” They'll kind of go, "Oh my God, he's saying Happy Christmas in July, August," okay, because I'm making it here. In December, I'm going to make Easter eggs. I'm going to go, “Happy Easter.” And now, you guys have absolutely killed it because you brought in the fall one. And now, I'm saying, “Happy Halloween,” in May.

Tara: (laughs) Oh, do we have to leave?

Matt: If we must, I understand, but I'm so glad, and we appreciate your time so much.

Denise: You're so welcome.

James: I think the guys on the floor loved this.

Michelle: It's been a great day.

[Transition.]

Tara: Sounds like holiday chocolates are eaten year round at James's house.

Matt: The product team and tasting panel at Trader Joe's are preparing for the holidays year round too. And it's especially meaningful when we finally get to share those products with our customers and friends and families now through the end of the year.

Tara: And we hope bringing them home and sharing them is special for you and your family too.

[Music ends. Transition to closing music.]

Tara: Hey, in our next episode, more chocolate.

Matt: To make sure you get that next episode, be sure to hit that free subscribe or follow button.

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

Matt: Until next time, thanks for listening.

Tara: And thanks for listening.