

Inside Trader Joe's Podcast Transcript — Episode 89: Hey Chicago, What's In Your Trader Joe's Shopping Cart?

[Light background music begins.]

Tara: We did this on Episode 79, and it was a lot of fun.

Matt: Made loud chewing noises?

Tara: No.

Matt: Put most of our freezer aisle into an air fryer?

Tara: Not on Episode 79.

Matt: Taste tested the dog treats?

Tara: Delicious, but no. On Episode 79, we sent our *Inside Trader Joe's* microphones to a neighborhood store and asked...

Crew Shout: What's in your cart?

Matt: Oh, yes. With Captain JayJay at our Studio City, California store.

Tara: And today we're going to our Lincoln Park store in Chicago with Captain Ken.

Matt: 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.

Tara: Captain Ken is standing by in Chicago.

[Static tuning noise.]

Matt: Now captains are sort of like store managers, but as I've been known to say, they have better snacks.

Tara: Thanks for taking the time to do this, Ken.

Ken: Thank you, guys. Always love talking to our customers.

Matt: The last thing we want to have happen is to bug anyone just there to do their shopping and get out, so you think you'll find some customers who want to be on the podcast?

Ken: Absolutely. While we try to figure out what to put on a display or where to move stuff in the store or figure out if it makes sense for them, who better to ask but the customers? So they're used to me kind of having fun with them.

Tara: You can ask them any question you like, but you always have to ask them one very important key question.

Ken: What's in your cart?

Tara: That's it.

Matt: Ken, how would you describe your customers in your Lincoln Park store? I mean their Lincoln Park store, what are they all about?

Ken: I've worked at four Trader Joe's now, and I got to say this one, they're a lot of fun. We have a lot of families that come in. I've been here three years, but I have crew members that have been here 20 and they see some kids that have gone through college now and I'm just meeting the younger ones, so they ring up on the register, we give them little name tags. They remember you the next time they come in. Lincoln Park Zoo is right around the corner, which is a fantastic zoo. We do get a lot of children at this store. They're just a lot of fun.

Tara: Ken, did you grow up in Chicago?

Ken: Yeah, I'm from Chicago. Live in Indiana right now though. That gets a lot of flack with my mates because a lot of those guys are like, why are you not in Chicago, but I love Indiana too.

Matt: Indiana is actually pretty close. How long is your drive to work?

Ken: Seventeen miles.

Tara: How'd you find your way to Trader Joe's? I mean, why'd you decide on a career with Trader Joe's?

[Theme music ends, transition to light upbeat music.]

Ken: Going to some parties at my best friend's house, RJ, I never liked tortilla chips, but I tried some of that, it used to be two-pound rounds. I'm like, where did you get this from, man? He's Indian, so his mom will have some of the frozen Indian meals for us too. That's what hooked me on Trader Joe's, and I was in between teaching and working at an outdoor store, and I was like, you know what? Let me give Trader Joe's a chance. It's a great place to work. I wish I would've found it sooner.

Matt: All right then, we're going to hush and let you do your thing. Talk to some customers and we'll check back in a bit.

Ken: Love that.

[Transition to inside Lincoln Park Trader Joe's store.]

Ken: Hi, how are you today?

Chelsea: I'm okay.

Ken: It's Trader Joe's podcast. Are you comfortable with us asking you a few questions?

Chelsea: That's fine, yeah.

Ken: What's your name first of all, and what brings you into Trader Joe's today?

Chelsea: My name is Chelsea.

Ken: Hi, Chelsea.

Chelsea: And we just got back from being out of town and my fridge is empty, so it was a restock for a family of five that brought me in.

Ken: So Chelsea on the podcast, we're asking folks...

Crew Shout: What's in your cart?

Chelsea: (laughs) Okay, yeah.

Ken: You want to share with us what's in your cart?

Chelsea: Sure. What's in my hand right now is carrot juice for myself. When I'm done, I'm going to drink it in the car. And then the other things in my cart, let's see. It's all veggies right now. Salads, kale, peppers, plums, mangoes.

Ken: What are you doing in the summertime?

Chelsea: I got three kids who are 10 to 14, so we go to the beach a lot and visit family and family visits us.

Ken: That's awesome. What's your favorite Trader Joe's product?

Chelsea: Okay, the one that we get the most are the dumplings. The pork and chicken frozen dumplings. I usually have nine bags in my freezer all the time. I just made them for the kids this morning for their lunch and I put it in a thermos and send it for their lunch.

Ken: That's a great idea. That's a great product. I do about 100 or 200 or 300 interviews a year and I always get that question and Chicken Soup Dumplings come up as my favorite product.

Chelsea: Oh, that one's weird. Just the regular chicken ones.

Ken: Just the regular, okay.

Chelsea: Yeah, because you can fry them, pan fry them, and then steam them and then they're just, yeah. The chicken soup ones are good, too. Yeah.

Ken: Who's the chef at home?

Chelsea: Me. (laughs) My son is 14 and he now knows how to cook a bunch of stuff as well.

Ken: What makes you come to this Trader Joe's?

Chelsea: Proximity to the house. I also know some of the employees and that's sweet. So that they say hi and I say hi back, so that's a nice little bonus.

Ken: Thank you so much, Chelsea.

Chelsea: You're welcome.

Ken: Appreciate you.

Chelsea: All right.

[Cash registers, bustling of customers.]

Ken: We'll get some folks over here. Hey, hey.

Christina: Hello.

Ken: What's up? What is your guys' name?

Christina: Oh, my name is Christina. This is Owen. What's your name? (speaking to her son)

Sixty: Sixty.

Christina: Sixty. Mm-hmm. His given name is Kieran, but not our chosen name most of the time. I know, it's Sixty, it changes. It was Chickpea, right? Chicopee. That was mom's favorite.

Ken: Okay.

Christina: Saquon, after Saquon Barkley.

Ken: That's a good one.

Christina: Mm-hmm. And now we've just gone to Sixty.

Ken: I think Saquon's my favorite.

Christina: Yeah (laughs).

Ken: You win a Super Bowl, you get to be a name for two months.

Christina: I know.

Ken: What are the ages?

Christina: Oh, so Owen here is almost nine months. Sixty is three.

Ken: Sixty is three. I like that. That's a nice...

Christina: And I am 41.

Ken: I'll ask you first...

Crew Shout: What's in your cart?

Christina: This is something that you like, right? (speaking to Sixty)

Sixty: Mac and Cheese.

Christina: Your Mac and Cheese.

Ken: (laughs)

Christina: What else did we get that you love?

Sixty: Beets.

Christina: Beets.

Ken: How do you cook beets?

Sixty: In a Insta.

Ken: In the Insta Pot?

Christina: Yeah. How long do we cook it for?

Sixty: 15.

Christina: 15 minutes, yeah.

Ken: So, you got to teach me how to be more healthy.

Christina: Yeah. Yep, we got lots of beets today.

Ken: Are you guys planning on grilling this summer?

Christina: Yeah, we try and get out on the grill. We do just a bunch of veggies. We'll do some salmon, which we got. Yeah, we didn't grill a lot last summer before Owen was born. Did we grill some sweet potatoes? (speaking to her kid) Yeah. Who likes to eat sweet potatoes? Owen. She loves sweet potatoes, right? Yeah, we got some.

Ken: Do you like sweet potato? Oh, look at that smile.

Christina: Yeah, she says sweet potatoes are my favorite. What's Owen's other favorite food?

Sixty: Mango.

Christina: Yeah, he loves mango.

Ken: (laughs) Any fun times at the beach?

Christina: Yeah, we like going to the beach. We bring some snacks to the beach. Puffs, the peanut butter puffs.

Ken: Oooo.

Christina: Yeah. We get the Bamba Peanut Butter Puffs.

Ken: Do you try the hazelnut ones? Have you had those?

Christina: Oh, I have had those.

Ken: Oh, man.

Christina: I have not given them to them. Those are just for mom. They're just so good. I don't want to share those. Those are delicious. They remind me of something from childhood and I can't put my finger on it.

Ken: I eat the whole bag, but that's just me.

Christina: It's a small bag. I feel like that is the appropriate serving.

Ken: Thank you, guys, so much.

Christina: Thank you.

Ken: Appreciate you guys shopping at TJ's.

Christina: Always. We love it here. Everybody, I mean, not just the food, but you guys are all amazing. What do they let you do? (speaking to Sixty)

Sixty: Check out.

Christina: Check out. We help with the checkout sometimes. What's the number for bananas? (speaking to Sixty)

Sixty: 4011.

Christina: 4011 (cash register beeping), that's the code for bananas.

Ken: (laughs)

Christina: What's the code for the green apple?

Sixty: 4017.

Christina: 4017 (cashing register beeping). We have one of those in our cart too.

Ken: I think he knows more of the buttons than I do.

Christina: Yeah, I don't know how it started. He loves these. He just would watch the buttons. We were checking out with Maddie one day and he was like, "I want to push the buttons." Okay, come on up. Then she would tell him which buttons to enter. We often get an eggplant just because he wants to enter it, not because any of us particularly like eggplant. He just likes entering the eggplant code.

Ken: (laughs) Thank you, guys, so much. I appreciate that. Absolutely.

[Music transition. Searching for another customer.]

Ken: Hi, how are you today?

Doug: Hey, how are you?

Ken: Doing well. We're doing the Trader Joe's podcast if you wanted to be a part of it.

Doug: I'm a big fan, so yes. I'm Doug.

Ken: How's it going, Doug?

Doug: It's going fine.

Ken: Awesome.

Doug: It's a little gloomy out, but I'm always happy when I'm here.

Ken: What brought you out in the rain to come to Trader Joe's?

Doug: Well, my cabinets are fairly bare and I'm on the hook for dinner tonight.

Ken: We're just walking around the store and asking customers...

Crew Shout: What's in your cart?

Ken: (laughs) What's for dinner tonight then?

Doug: I'm going to make a slow cooked short ribs.

Ken: Ooh, okay.

Doug: I got some produce, your Crunchy Chili Onion Hummus. Excellent find. Organic beef broth.

Ken: Okay, what do you do with the beef broth?

Doug: You put it in the slow cooker to kind of give it a base. That liquidy, gravy base. Cook for six hours. I got some veggies to throw in there. Yeah, I'm the cook.

Ken: You're fairly often on the hook for dinner then?

Doug: Yep, I'm a homemaker. I also decorate with these seasonal branches. Nice touch, put them in the window.

Ken: Okay.

Doug: Make it feel a little springy even though it doesn't feel springy outside.

Ken: Are you a fan of our flowers?

Doug: I am, yeah.

Ken: What's your favorite flower?

Doug: I just get your seasonal bouquets. I get two usually.

Ken: Thank you. Appreciate it.

Doug: Thank you.

[Music transition. Searching for another customer.]

Ken: Hi, how are you today? What's your name?

Chantelle: Chantelle.

Ken: Chantelle. Nice to meet you, Chantelle.

Chantelle: Nice to meet you.

Ken: We're doing a Trader Joe's podcast. We're just asking customers...

Crew Shout: What's in your cart?

Chantelle: Oh my gosh. It's the same every time. Fresh flowers, produce, snacks for the college kids.

Ken: How can you beat the value on our flowers, right? They last such a long time.

Chantelle: They do. Apparently, you guys get them every day. Usually I get hydrangeas. One of my staples at Trader Joe's is the Teeny Tiny Avocados. I love those. They will last me all week and they're the perfect portion and they tend to just ripen all through the week perfectly. I just grab one, cut it up, add it to my salad or my toast, my sourdough bread, and I'm good to go.

Ken: Great value too, right?

Chantelle: Great value. I can't get those anywhere else. Oh, and the Brie Bites.

Ken: What do you do with the Brie Bites?

Chantelle: I just snack on them.

Ken: Okay.

Chantelle: I just grab one and go.

Ken: Alright. What do you do for summertime in Chicago?

Chantelle: Anything by the water we love, outdoor festivals. Every weekend there's something, so we try to hit those up as much as we can. We do grill out a lot, so kebabs, things like that. A good burger on the grill. My daughter's coming home from college this weekend.

Ken: Okay.

Chantelle: She loves these.

Ken: The Rolled Corn Tortillas.

Chantelle: She loves the Buffalo Dip.

Ken: A funny story. The Rolled Corn Tortillas, my mates always make fun of me that I put those on display so much, but this neighborhood loves those chips.

Chantelle: Oh, we do, yes.

Ken: Yeah. So college kids, what do they typically eat?

Chantelle: They like the inexpensive wine. (laughs)

Ken: (laughs)

Chantelle: I know that much. The Vinho Verde. That's a good one. Having the prepared cheeses and stuff that they can just kind of throw out in the already pre-made dips and vegetables...

Ken: So what you're telling me is that I'm still a college kid, right?

Chantelle: Is that how you do it? That's okay, it takes time.

Ken: Appreciate it. Thank you so much, Chantelle.

Chantelle: I'm sure you're going to need to do some splicing.

Ken: Awesome. Our customers are fantastic here.

[Music transition. Searching for another customer.]

Ken: Hi. How are you today then? Hey, so we are doing a Trader Joe's podcast.

John: Sure.

Ken: My name is Ken. I'm the store captain.

John: How are you doing, Captain?

Ken: And what's your name?

John: John.

Ken: John...

Crew Shout: What's in your cart?

John: I got some peanut butter for me and for my dog.

Ken: Okay.

John: I got some eggs, some avocado, and some potatoes for my dog. Flowers for me, maybe for my dog.

Ken: (laughs) What's the one item you have to have before you leave?

John: Bone broth.

Ken: Bone broth, okay.

John: I don't want to get Botox, so I need bone broth.

Ken: (laughs) Thanks for that.

John: A lot of bone broth for the collagen so I don't wrinkle.

Ken: How does chicken bone broth work? I don't eat beef.

John: I don't do chicken bone. No, that's for the weak. You need that cow in you. Look at cows, cows don't have wrinkles, do they? They're just big and fat.

Ken: True, true.

John: Don't tip them.

Ken: (laughs) Which peanut butter is for your dog?

John: The almond butter is for me because I'm watching my waistline. The peanut butter is for my dog. I'll put in a treat, and I'll freeze it to make it difficult for him.

Ken: What do you do with the potatoes for the dog? Do you freeze those too?

John: No, so I make my dog's food, so I combine beef, potatoes, rice. I have, really I have the healthiest dog in the world. He is the mutt of mutts. Rescue, adopt, don't shop.

Ken: What's your dog's name?

John: Kobe.

Ken: Kobe. Huge Kobe fan?

John: Yes.

Ken: Oh, yeah.

John: For sure.

Ken: So who's the GOAT?

John: LeBron.

Ken: LeBron, all right.

John: And I said that in Chicago. The best summer city in the world possibly.

Ken: Yeah.

John: They tell me. I just haven't been anywhere maybe.

Ken: (laughs)

John: I'm just enjoying to be outside, riding my bike. I e-Bike, I'm a little lazy. Enjoying life.

Ken: (laughs) Thank you so much.

John: Yeah, no problem.

[Music transition. Searching for another customer.]

Ken: How are you today?

Ellie: Good.

Ken: Do you listen to podcasts? Would you like to be on *Inside Trader Joe's* podcast?

Ellie: Sure.

Ken: What's your name?

Ellie: My name's Ellie.

Ken: Ellie. Nice to meet you, Ellie. I'm Ken, I'm the captain at this store. We're just asking a couple questions. We just like to have a little fun with it.

Crew Shout: What's in your cart?

Ellie: Just restocking the fridge. Needed some more dog treats. My dogs go crazy for them.

Ken: What kind of dog do you have?

Ellie: I have two. A golden retriever, Aussie mix, and then a mini Aussie German Shepherd mix. They're very crazy.

Ken: What are your dog's favorite Trader Joe's treats?

Ellie: They love these peanut butter ones. The peanut butter cookies.

Ken: I don't have any pets, but every time I'm stocking these, I think it must be a good dog treat. That Peanut Butter Flavored Dog Treat has to be really good, right?

Ellie: I tried it.

Ken: Yeah?

Ellie: They taste like a very, very slight peanut butter taste, but the dogs go crazy for them.

Ken: What do you have to have when you come to Trader Joe's?

Ellie: I make the pesto chicken with the burrata and the tomatoes and a balsamic glaze over it. Just put it in the oven. Super easy to make and it is delicious.

Ken: Now do you use Trader Joe's Balsamic Glaze?

Ellie: Absolutely.

Ken: It's so good.

Ellie: So good. Then I usually do just the simplest shaved beef and broccoli and rice deal because it's super easy to make and it's very healthy. Those are my faves.

Ken: Now what do you typically do in Chicago?

Ellie: This will be our first summer living right near Fulton Market, so I'm excited about that. Then we usually end up hitting up maybe like one day of Lollapalooza. Me and my fiancé were thinking about getting a two-day.

Ken: When are you guys getting married?

Ellie: October 11th this year.

Ken: Awesome. Congrats. Congrats.

Ellie: Thank you.

Ken: Is it going to be in Chicago?

Ellie: Nope, it's going to be in Naples, Florida.

Ken: Oh, wow, okay. Well, thank you so much for shopping at the Lincoln Park Trader Joe's, and congrats on your wedding in October.

Ellie: Thank you.

Ken: Enjoy Chicago.

Ellie: Thank you so much.

Ken: Thank you. Have a great day.

Ellie: You too.

[Static tuning noise.]

Ken: With that, Tara and Matt, let's send it back to you at the mothership.

[Light upbeat music begins.]

Tara: Okay.

Matt: Nice job, Ken. We really probably should let you get back to work.

Tara: Oh, but before we do, let's pass the microphone around to a few crew members.

Ken: Awesome.

Tara: Everybody, start by telling us your name and a Trader Joe's product that you recommend a lot to your customers there in Chicago.

[Bustling store noise in the background.]

Ken: What do you guys like to recommend?

Emma: I'm Emma and I love to recommend any of our gluten-free products, but specifically our muffins because they truly do not taste gluten-free at all. They taste like a real muffin.

Deb: Hi, I'm Deb and I love to find new products in our store where we have recipes on our website, and I can work with customers to help them put together three or four items to come up with something really exciting and new and help them understand how to use some of these interesting new products in our store.

Terry: Hi, I'm Terry. What I really like to recommend to customers is our bourbon and our tequila. Great values and they taste amazing.

Lee: Hi, I'm Lee and what I like to recommend is cheese. I think all of our cheese is really good and depending on what they're looking for, but definitely the cheese.

Bobby: Hi, everybody, my name is Bobby. As far as a recommendation for customers, I'm always pointing them towards the Espiral Vinho Verde. Very popular wine we have here. Very tasty.

Kate: Hey, I'm Kate. I like to recommend our dessert section, specifically the frozen desserts. We have a lot of really cool different mochi products, specifically the Blood Orange Mochi. That's a newer one and I always veer them that way because it's a guaranteed success.

Hannah: Hello, my name is Hannah. As far as a product I would recommend to customers, probably whatever is in season as far as produce. In the summertime, tomatoes. It's really nice to get those things while they're at their peak.

Sherry: My name is Sherry. My favorite item to recommend is the Caramelized Onion Cheddar Cheese. I love that cheese, it's phenomenal. Great to eat on its own and also great to grate over soups and stews and it's just very delicious.

Matt: It is great to grate.

Tara: Okay, is that everybody here?

Ken: Yeah.

Tara: Thank you all so much.

Ken: Absolutely love the TJ's podcast. What a pleasure it was to be on it. Send your microphone back anytime.

Matt: You know, we might just take you up on that.

[Transition to closing music.]

Tara: And there you have it. Another...

Crew Shout: What's in your cart?

Tara: ...edition of *Inside Trader Joe's*. We have many more episodes of all kinds coming your way soon, so be sure to hit that free subscribe or follow button.

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

Tara: Until next time, thanks for listening.

Matt: And thanks for listening.