

## Transcript — Episode 39: A Trader Joe’s Shopping List of Fabulous Fall Finds

Matt: All right, Tara, let's make that...

*[Ta-da music booms.]*

Matt: .....big wine announcement.

Tara: No, Matt, we're going to keep everybody in suspense until the end of the episode.

Matt: Well, I hope they don't just fast forward...

*[Tape recording fast forwarding.]*

Matt: ... because we have a lot of other cool new stuff for fall too.

Tara: From the Trader Joe's mothership in Monrovia, California.

Matt: Let's go Inside Trader Joe's.

*[Theme Music begins and two bells ring 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 marketing product guy.

Tara: In the Classic Peanuts TV Special, Linus waited and waited for the arrival of the Great Pumpkin.

Matt: And waited and waited. But the wait for seasonal pumpkin products at Trader Joe's is over.

Tara: I had to stop counting how many times people asked on our social media channels, "When are the pumpkin products coming?" And that started like at the end of July.

Matt: So it's September. Pumpkin things are showing up. All told, it looks like we have something approaching 75 pumpkin products for this year.

Tara: Wow!

Matt: They're all available for a short window of time. And really that window of time is built around...

*[Theme music ends.]*

Matt: ... the bet we place with the quantity and how quickly customers buy that up.

Tara: With so many of these products being pumpkin related, let's talk to Jack.

Matt: Jack-O-Lantern?

Jack: No, no, that would be me.

Tara: Jack, our produce category manager at the other Trader Joe's mothership in Boston.

Jack: Although my face has been known to scare small children.

Tara: (laughs) Oh, Jack.

*[Upbeat music begins.]*

Tara: We have all these produce things in the podcast, and we never seem to have this many produce items in a shopping list episode. So first on our list is the Holiday Vegetable Hash. And that came in last fall and then suddenly it was gone again. And I was like, "Oh, I really love that!" And so I'm excited to have it back.

Jack: This was an item that we thought that people like to cook at home, but they're time starved and there's nothing more time wasting than trying to dice up vegetables. We picked a nice winter mix of vegetables with sweet potatoes, butternut squash, but really the thing that makes this so successful is its versatility. You can use it as a side dish. You can add a protein to it. You can microwave it. You can saute it. It's really, really very versatile. Very versatile hash.

Tara: I love the seasonings in this mix: the parsley, the sage, the rosemary. It's really...this is fall. Matt, what about that Harvest Apple Salad Kit?

Matt: What about it? I mean, customers went crazy for this.

Jack: This is a really big successful item for us. It's a fall item. Nothing says fall like apples. We want the best leafy greens that we have at the time. And we don't want to be tied into one kind because quite honestly, you know, where they grow it may be too cold, so we pick the ones that we think give you the best flavor mix that flavor the profile. And we add the Unexpected Cheddar. It's a terrific cheese.

Matt: I'm so excited Jack to have the Rainbow Pears. This is like an assortment of pears. I love pears. I think pears are wildly underrated.

Jack: I wish they were more popular. The best thing about this Rainbow Pear is you get three different types of flavors.

Matt: Just such a nice visual touch too. They look beautiful. As crazy as it might sound, they look great in a fruit bowl.

Jack: They'll ripen up in a few days on your counter. They're all grown in Washington State and Oregon. They come in the fall and we keep them through midwinter.

Tara: Something else that I think looks good in a fruit bowl, but also looks way better when you cut it open are the Cara Cara Navel Oranges. This is an interesting orange because it's not orange on the inside.

Jack: When you cut them open they look like a grapefruit inside. However, luckily they don't taste like a grapefruit on the inside.

Tara: Not to disparage the grapefruit.

Matt: Try throwing them in a salad.

Jack: We have them available through the fall, right through the winter.

Tara: I bet that even tastes good if you put them in with that Harvest Apple Salad Kit.

Matt: Oh yeah.

Tara: Cause you could literally be comparing apples to oranges.

Jack: (laughs)

Tara: Sorry, couldn't resist. We want to talk to you about, I would say, it's the elephant in the room, but it's really the gourd in the corner...pumpkins.

Matt: You loved Elf on a Shelf, now get ready for the Gourd in the Corner.

Tara: But that's a whole other episode.

Matt: Do you want to get right into thumping?

Tara: This is a thing, the whole idea of "pumpkin thumping".

Jack: It's a great way to find out, you know, if you have a good pumpkin or not. I mean, pumpkins are hollow in the middle.

Matt: There's some aspect of art to pumpkin thumping.

Tara: Jack, can we do a little pumpkin thumping on-air here?

Jack: Let's try it.

Matt: Here we go...a little thump.

*[Lower pitched thump, somewhat hollow sounding.]*

Jack: I think that's a good one. I think you've got a winner there.

Tara: All right. We've done our pumpkin diligence Jack.

Jack: When you come to Trader Joe's, you'll find a huge selection of pumpkins. We get them from Texas for our Texas stores. They're grown in California for our California stores. Pacific Northwest, we get them from Washington State or Oregon, little of the country. Mostly, we do try to support the local farmers whenever possible.

Matt: That is cool.

Jack: It's something we do, we take a lot of pride in.

Matt: Thanks for your time. Keep up the great stuff.

Jack: Thank you.

*[Music ends.]*

Tara: Okay, Matt, one of the products on our list of new fall products was actually developed by our friend, Product Developer Jennie, Pumpkin Spice Espresso Beans. Hi Jennie!

Jennie: Hi!

Tara: You've been super busy this year. Today the specific product we want to talk to you about is our Pumpkin Spice Espresso Beans.

Matt: My recollection is that these were not an out of the gate hit with the tasting panel, that there was some back and forth.

Jennie: I think it was number...version three or four that made it through the panel.

Tara: So, here's the bag (bag crumple noise). Little bag, right?

Jennie: Yeah, it's a little 2.5 ounce bag. Everyone's on the go for the holidays. You know, you just pop them in your purse and when you need to be perked up, you just pop them in your mouth.

Tara: And if you don't have a purse, you can just grab them and put them in your backpack or you can put them in a briefcase or you can put them in a lunch box.

Matt: And if you have like an autumnal harvest fanny pack...

Jennie: (laughs)

Tara: Tell us about these and how this came about.

Jennie: What really actually inspired me was our Pumpkin Spice Coffee. That was such a huge success.

Matt: It's like a space station, Pumpkin Spice Latte. So you won't spill it in zero gravity.

Tara: You can like really discern the ginger and the nutmeg and the cinnamon. Like I can pick out all of those flavors, which is pretty great for a sweet, crunchy thing.

Matt: They're crispy.

*[Crunching in background under...]*

Tara: But it says that each bag contains a little more caffeine than a single cup of coffee.

Matt: Can't stop, won't stop. Okay...how about that? (crunching) I'm still crunching. I'm crunching the espresso beans. You don't say, Matt, huh? Hmmm? On edge much?

Tara: What else? Anything else? You excited about anything else this fall?

Jennie: Oh, there's so much to be excited for.

Tara: (laughs)

Matt: Like casual sneakers on the runway? What are we talking about?

Jennie: Autumnal Spice Fanny Packs?

Matt: Hello, editing room floor.

Tara: I think we're done.

Jennie: Ok (laughs).

Matt: You're excused.

*[Transition.]*

Matt: And next on our fall shopping list.

Tara: Something else that is coming back, people anticipate it's re-arrival, Spiced Pumpkin Madeleine Cookies. So not pumpkin spice, but spiced pumpkin. So there is pumpkin in these cookies and there is plenty of pumpkin spice flavor happening. And this is just a twist on the classic madeleine cookie, in that little shell shape. And they're a little more brown than the classic madeleines in that because of the addition of pumpkin.

Matt: And these madeleines have that classic textural difference where the outside is just a little bit crisp and the inside is moist and cakey.

Tara: They're really good for fall, like really excellent with a cup of coffee or a cup of hot tea.

Matt: Also a repeat coming back from last year that Maple Espresso Black Tea Blend. And this would work so, so well with those Spice Pumpkin Madeleines. It's a tea bag product. You get sort of a nice deep roasty bitterness from the espresso. The maple flavor is from a maple sugar, a little bit of sweetness, but not too sweet. It's a really nice tea.

Tara: Inside the tea bag there's not only black tea, but there's espresso, ground espresso.

Matt: Correct.

Tara: We plan to bring that one back at, like, the beginning of October. Is that right?

Matt: That's what we're hoping for.

Tara: I have something that's brand new that's coming, it'll probably be in the store right around the beginning of September, and that's the Pumpkin Oat Beverage. This one is really just a pumpkin season spin on oat beverages, which have become a really popular alternative to dairy milk for a lot of people. It actually has pumpkin puree as well as the pumpkin spice

flavor. It's lactose-free, it's dairy-free, it's vegan, it's gluten-free, it's, you know, it's all of those things.

Matt: All the diets of avoidance, you're covered.

*[Music ends.]*

Matt: Okay, I'm looking at my shopping list, my personal shopping list for fall, and on it is a new pasta sauce. And actually to get us hip to this new pasta sauce, there's someone, this is a first time appearance on Inside Trader Joe's podcast, Product Developer Trang. Trang, thanks for coming by.

Trang: Thank you for having me.

*[Light upbeat music begins.]*

Matt: Trang, I want to get into our Pumpkin Alfredo sauce. So it's fall, it's limited, it's special. It's actually made with actual pumpkin and you worked on it. Tell us a little bit about this incredible sauce.

Trang: Hmm...Pumpkin Alfredo Sauce. We looked at our every day or limited items that are our customer favorites and we have a very successful Alfredo sauce program. We have a Limone in the springtime. We have a new Cacio e Pepe which is not necessarily Alfredo, but in the same family. So we know that our customers love pumpkin and so we went to our very reliable, very fun Alfredo supplier out in Italy, and we asked them to make us some Pumpkin Alfredo Sauce.

Matt: So it's not just like a happenstance, "Oh, I just fell over this Alfredo sauce and it happened to have pumpkin." Like you deliberately went after a specific idea.

Trang: And I want to say, we tried maybe 25 versions of Pumpkin Alfredo Sauce.

Matt: Is that hyperbole, like really 25?

Trang: At least 25. The first iterations we tried with the very traditional pumpkin spices and we got almost pretty much all the way to the tasting panel doing versions with pumpkin spice. And then one day someone said, "Why are we doing Pumpkin Spice Pumpkin Alfredo Sauce? Like, let's do a savory version." And so the one that we have now is more cheese and pumpkin forward as opposed to pumpkin spice. And so it has, you know, some spices like sage and black pepper, but not like the cinnamon and the nutmeg. And in order to get us to that really great pumpkin flavor, we reduce the types of cheese in it so there's only two types of cheese in this Pumpkin Alfredo, as opposed to our everyday ones, which I think has four.

Matt: You start tasting this pasta sauce, you made a pivot, you made a turn away from that classic kind of pumpkin pie flavor and towards something different. And even this idea of limiting the cheese to let the pumpkin itself, that flavor come through I think it's pretty fascinating.

Trang: Since pumpkin is the first ingredient, the texture's going to be a little bit different than your typical Alfredo. It's a little bit thicker.

Tara: I'm grilling chicken and serving it and pouring this over the top of the chicken.

Matt: Oh, I'm thinking grill. Now I'm thinking grilled vegetables. Grilled zucchini, related to pumpkins like they're cousins, and grilled eggplant and then use that to make a lasagna.

Tara: Okay, I'm in.

Matt: That would be really tasty.

Tara: Okay, so there's something else I want to try. This is another product that you developed that is also on our fall shopping list. I want us to go to the kitchen and give this one a try. It's the Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese Bites.

Matt: Maybe someone will show me how to use an air fryer.

Tara: We're going to do that, Matt. And you're going to be like, "It's that easy? Why am I not doing this?"

*[Music up, then fades to background. Transition to kitchen.]*

Tara: Are we rolling here? All right, we're in the kitchen and Trang, you're going to tell us how to make the Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese Bites in the air fryer.

Trang: Right. So we do have air fryer instructions.

Tara: So there are air fryer instructions actually on the box.

Trang: Yeah, there are.

Tara: That's fantastic. So let's just get to it.

*[Air fryer hum starting in background.]*

Tara: How long do they take in the air fryer?

Trang: They take about 10 minutes? Eight to 10.

Tara: I think that after this, Matt Sloan will be an air fryer convert. What led to this product? Like, okay, we have butternut squash, mac and cheese, we have mac and cheese bites. What made you think those made sense together?

Trang: We actually started with a Pumpkin Mac and Cheese Bite. Twenty-five versions later, not kidding, we tried at least 25. It's really hard to deliver that pumpkin flavor when the first thing that you taste is crunchy fat. And so with butternut squash, those flavors sweeter, and when you roast the butternut squash, like in this product, you really get that roasted butternut squash flavor. And so that's how we changed it to butternut squash.

*[Air fryer stops & beeps.]*

Tara: Hey, I heard that beep, Trang. So let's get those. Let's get the bad boys on a plate.

Trang: All right.

*[Sound of plates being placed on the table. Tapping air fryer basket against plates.]*

Tara: Let those cool off for a minute, so we don't end up in the hospital.

*[Placing air fryer basket back into air fryer.]*

Trang: Butternut squash is the number one ingredient in this as well.

Tara: Okay.

Trang: And then followed by heavy cream and then macaroni.

Tara: Okay.

Matt: So ingredients are always listed in predominance of weight in the recipe. So there's more butternut squash than anything else by weight in these Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese Bites. That's exciting.

Trang: That's very exciting.

Tara: Okay, I want to stop talking about them and I want to start eating them.

Matt: It's like a mac and cheese hot lava bite.

Tara: You can really taste the butternut squash. It's got that really nice sweetness that you, that is like a natural roasted sweetness that comes out and the texture of the macaroni is really good as well. It's not squishy.

Matt: I'm getting some sage, some classic fall herbs here.

Tara: What do you think of the air fryer qualities Matt? Done in 10 minutes, nice and crunchy.

Matt: It's great. I mean, I like, you know, anything fried is pretty tasty and quickly is even better, but it's good. I don't know that I'm sold on needing a whole new appliance at home, but I'll think about it.

Tara: Trang, thank you so much for joining us, for talking us through a couple of these new products and for, um, making us a really delicious snack.

Trang: Yeah, of course, anytime.

Matt: Those are tasty.

*[Music ends.]*

Tara: Okay, so here's what we have left.

Matt: So let's look at the list. I'm going to check twice. You wanna do coffee?

Tara: Yeah, let's do coffee.

*[Light upbeat music begins.]*

Tara: It should be just arriving in stores as this podcast is launching and it's part of our small lot coffee program. It's called Indonesia Bali Kintamani and it comes from an Indonesian village on the island of Bali called Dosa.

Matt: And it's really born out of a shift in mindset. When we come across something that we love, we want as much of it as possible because we want customers to be able to experience it for as long as they want to. And that shift in mindset came about when we started realizing that that was limiting.

Tara: Right.

Matt: And rather than skip that entirely and never bring those to market, we thought we'd try it. And it's really turned into an interesting program where we literally are moving

around the coffee growing belt around the world and just able to showcase these really great coffees.

Tara: It's introduced me to a whole lot of coffees that I never would have had the opportunity to taste otherwise.

Matt: This one is just a nice, solid rich cup of coffee. If you are in stores and it's September and you walk past that new product shelf or an area like the coffee section, you'll see a really bold bag, lots of bright colors and simple shapes and that's that Kintamani Coffee.

Tara: All right, Matt, we've talked tea, we've talked coffee. What goes really well with coffee?

*[Game Show music begins.]*

Matt: Cream.

Tara: What else goes really well with coffee?

Matt: A cup.

Tara: No, no, you would not be very good at game shows. I'm talking about cookies.

*[Game Show music ends.]*

Matt: A biscotti would be nice.

Tara: Tell me about that.

Matt: Maple syrup is certainly not new, but we've been looking for, thinking about, new ways to get maple flavor in places other than the breakfast table. And what we came up with are these Mini Maple Walnut Biscotti. And they really are what I just said. They're little biscotti. They do have what? Nice walnuts. And walnuts sometimes lend a needed counterpoint to sweetness.

Tara: Why don't you open them up because I'd love to give those a taste.

Matt: There is the requisite safety seal (seal rip noise). That's what safety sounds like (packaging noise). I'm grabbing the one with the most drizzle...hold on.

Tara: Maple just smells like breakfast to me.

Matt: But that does smell sort of like a French toast biscotti.

Tara: Alright, here we go (crunching).

*[Light music begins.]*

Matt: You cannot eat biscotti and sneak up on people. Or biscotti in the library? No way.

Tara: That's why biscotti was not one of the weapons in the game clue.

Matt: Oh.

Tara: Because you would've found them out right away.

Matt: But some biscotti are hard enough as to be dangerous so...

Tara: That's true. These are not. I think that's important to note. Some biscotti, if you don't dunk them in coffee, they're impossible to eat without feeling like you're going to break your teeth. These are not those biscotti.

*[More chewing and crunching.]*

Tara: Those are delish.

Matt: Hmm mm.

Tara: That's coming fall, right. So it's probably end of September, early October.

Matt: The timing for that, for those Mini Maple Walnut Biscotti.

Tara: Let's keep going on our fall shopping list. What's next?

Matt: Another beverage. This is from the Shell House, that brand of spiked seltzers, hard seltzers, containing alcohol. This is a Pumpkin Spice Seltzer Water.

Tara: If you look at these, they're about 100 calories in a can, right?

Matt: Yeah.

Tara: They're 5% alcohol, which is about the same as a lower alcohol beer, right? And they're gluten-free. A few years ago this entire category of product didn't even exist. And now there are seasonal flavors coming in and out, and it's just something new to try and experience and then move on to the next seasonal flavor.

Matt: And I think after that, we have an O Tannenbaum Spiked Seltzer, um, that tastes like a tree.

Tara: I don't want to have that one (laughs). I'm not ready for that.

Matt: This seltzer tastes like sleigh bells.

Tara: (laughs) Oh, goodness gracious, Matt, we are coming towards the end of our list. There's something on this list that I fell so in love with when it came to the tasting panel. These are the Apple Cinnamon Oatmeal Bites.

Matt: Visually you're really similar to those Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese Bites.

Tara: It's apple cinnamon oatmeal, but it's wrapped. It's made into a ball and breaded on the outside, frozen, and then you put it in the oven or the air fryer or the toaster oven or any of those places. And you can just take it with you.

Matt: They're almost like little oatmeal fritters.

Tara: So these will be in our freezer case, not just for the fall, but moving forward as well.

Matt: What's next?

Tara: This, friends, in podcast land is Trader Joe's Thanksgiving Pie Chocolate Truffles.

Matt: I remember these now. Oh, yes!

Tara: It's a box of pie-shaped chocolate truffles and they have holiday pie flavored fillings.

Matt: So they're very sort of fancy looking chocolates. There's a lot of flavors here and they're little truffles and I think, are they Belgian?

Tara: Let's see... Product of Belgium. There are eight pieces in every box. There's two of each flavor (package opening noise). There we go. I'm going to choose the caramel apple cinnamon filling (package noise). Ooh, that's really good. I think people will really like these.

Matt: I hope so. I think so too, I just tried the one that's caramel with some pecan, um, kind of a take on a pecan pie and then the chocolate and vanilla cream pie.

Tara: Oh you tasted two?

Matt: Yes, I just tasted two. I'm quick... with this candy eating business, all right? I'm on it! And these are good. And, you know, always a hallmark of an interesting piece of candy.

You got a lot of textural variety. Yeah, you've got a harder snappier chocolate shell. You've got creamier truffle type fillings. You've got crunchy bits on top.

*[Music ends.]*

Matt: That's really fun.

Tara: And finally...

Matt: The moment we've all been waiting for, drum roll, please.

*[Tympani roll.]*

Tara: While it lasts, it's going to be here soon. It's such an exceptional value in our wine section. Oh my goodness, this is a good one.

Off mic voice: (person performing the tympani roll) Hurry up! I can't do this forever.

Tara: Trader Joe's 2020 Platinum Reserve Napa Cabernet Sauvignon.

*[Tympani ends.]*

Matt: And if you, or someone you know,...

*[Upbeat music begins.]*

Matt: ... are a fan of big Napa Valley Cabs, this is the ticket for you. It's really delicious. We have just about 10,000 cases, which sounds like a massive amount of wine, really. But it's not, it's going to go quickly when this comes out.

Tara: Last year was a challenging year for wine sales, for a lot of reasons having to do with hospitality businesses. A lot of wineries need to move product out so that they can bring in this year's harvest and make this year's wine. We pay them cash.

Matt: We're talking about a brand different from the producer's brand and oftentimes the producer has a bunch of equity that they've built up in that brand identity, maybe marketing costs and maybe even a specific price point that they want associated with that brand.

Tara: And it does come from a winery that is known for extremely expensive bottles of wine, like in the hundreds of dollar range, expensive bottles of wine. We can't tell you who that wine maker is.

Matt: And we're so confident in the product that we're willing to take the risk to sell it without that famous name we cannot reveal.

Tara: It's \$14.99 everywhere we sell wine.

Matt: Yeah, correct. Well, except for Ohio and that's a whole different show Ohio.

Tara: (chuckles)

Matt: The label Trader Joe's Platinum Reserve. It's a Cabernet Sauvignon from the Napa Valley. It's the 2020 vintage. On that back label you'll see lot number 103. That's the special indicator lot there.

*[Music ends.]*

Tara: I am so excited about this.

Matt: All right. Let's put a cork in this episode.

*[Closing theme music begins.]*

Tara: We've touched on quite a few new products for fall, but there are more. To stay up-to-date please check out our website. Pick up a copy of the Fearless Flyer in your store. Keep an eye on the Trader Joe's Instagram account.

Matt: Now we hip folks call that our "Insta." Like, "Hey, check out our Insta."

Tara: And be sure to hit that free subscribe or follow button on your podcast app.

Matt: It *is* free and worth every penny. It's fire.

Tara: Oh, another hip word. You're so dope, Matt.

Matt: Thanks.

Tara: No, I was using the old definition.

Matt: Oh.

Tara: Until next time, thanks for listening.

Matt: And thanks for listening.

Tara: Yo.

Matt: Yeah, uh, yeah. Wow.