

Inside Trader Joe's Podcast Transcript — ICYMI: How Do I Find Great Trader Joe's Recipes

[Light upbeat music.]

Tara: Our crew members get a lot of questions and they're really good at answering them.

Matt: We love answering questions, so please keep 'em coming.

Tara: Here's a good one about Trader Joe's recipes on another ICYMI, in case you missed it, Special Episode of *Inside Trader Joe's*.

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

Matt: ICYMI. How do I find good TJ's recipes?

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: How *do* I find good Trader Joe's recipes?

Matt: That's easy. You do what I do. You ask Kathleen.

[Theme music ends. Light upbeat music begins.]

Kathleen: I'm happy to help.

Matt: But maybe as a listener you don't work with Kathleen and you can't just strike up a conversation in the hallway.

Tara: But Kathleen does help everybody with great recipes because she's the person here in our offices who is primarily responsible for developing and creating them.

Kathleen: It's my favorite thing to do. I'm obsessed with cooking, eating, and finding out what people are cooking and eating.

Tara: And by making those things into recipes, you're helping other people then figure out what to cook and eat. I love this.

Kathleen: Precisely.

Tara: Hold on. Gonna grab my computer.

[Computer keyboard typing in background.]

Tara: I got an email from you this morning that had a list of six new recipes that are just about ready to go up on our website. And they all sound so good, Rosemary, Almond, and Olive Oil Sundae. OMG.

Kathleen: Oh, yeah. I'm excited about this one.

Tara: Wow.

Matt: If only for the, what the heck is going?

Tara: And then like some things that are not so out of the ordinary, Carnitas Quesadilla. Right?

Kathleen: Yes, but yum.

Tara: But we had new tortillas and it's like, "What can we do with new tortillas?" Awesome. What else? Green Goddess Fried Goat Cheese Medallions.

Matt: Whoa.

Tara: Right?

Matt: Now that one to me, that sounds maybe not so approachable from a technique. Do I need special equipment?

Kathleen: You need some Trader Joe's products, that's the trick here. Use our Green Goddess Seasoning Blend. Grab a log of our Chevre and then coat them in panko and fry them so you get this crispy crust.

Tara: So, hold, hold up. Walk us through this particular recipe 'cause I'm fascinated by it. You have the goat cheese log.

Kathleen: You have the goat cheese log. You slice it into medallions.

Tara: Love it.

Kathleen: You make this panko breadcrumb mixture seasoned with our Green Goddess.

Tara: Ooh.

Kathleen: Coat, coat, coat, fry, top salad with goat cheese medallions.

Matt: I've been to one fancy restaurant in my life and they had such a thing. They had these crunchy, warm, delicious medallions of goat cheese, of Chevre, and this is a way to do this at home. You could bowl people over. They thought they were coming over for a casual dinner and you got this going on.

Kathleen: Breaking out the goat cheese medallions, yeah.

Tara: You used the Green Goddess Seasoning on this, but really you could use any seasoning.

Kathleen: Absolutely. It's pretty versatile. Figure out the framework for the recipe and then do what you wanna do with it.

Tara: How do you come up with this stuff?

[Music transition.]

Kathleen: I have a large appetite.

Matt: But this is based on a priori knowledge. Do you need to experience it to be able to come up with it as an idea? Or are you just, I mean, you're not just riffing and then you put it to paper and that's it. You're actually making this stuff.

Kathleen: Absolutely. It can start as an idea. Or it can start as a Trader Joe's product that I'm fascinated by. It can start as an experience that I want to recreate. It can come from multiple different places. The end result is a recipe on [TraderJoes.com](https://www.traderjoes.com).

Matt: And a recipe is really, it's a set of instructions for preparing a particular dish. It's gonna have the, all the ingredients. It's really something that's gonna lead to a particular outcome. You have to sort of whet people's appetite, if you will, with the idea, with the name. But then you gotta help 'em get there.

Kathleen: We take these amazing photos of our recipes after we've created them to show people you can do this, and this is what it's gonna look like when you're done.

Matt: Those photos, of course, living on the Trader Joe's website, [TraderJoes.com](https://www.traderjoes.com). Those aren't styled by professional stylists necessarily. They are the things that were actually prepared and what is then enjoyed by the crew to taste and validate the efficacy of this recipe. But it's not a special project unto itself, it's just, it's just a picture of the thing that was made, and that sounds so basic, but that's different from a lot of representation of cooking in online places or elsewhere.

Kathleen: That's the food. That's what we're eating.

[Music transition.]

Tara: And you can make it look like this. You can make it taste as good as we know it tastes. We're not creating these recipes in like fabulous, massive, commercial kitchen.

Kathleen: Not at all.

Tara: (laughs)

Kathleen: Not at all.

Matt: Not at the Cordon Bleu?

Kathleen: With the chef's hat.

Matt: With a little toque. Yeah, no offense Cordon Bleu. Loved your show.

Kathleen: Yes.

Matt: And your stuff.

Tara: And your chicken.

Matt: And your sandwich.

Tara: (laughs)

Matt: Okay.

Tara: But you're, I see you in the kitchen here all the time. It's like mad scientist.

Kathleen: Yeah.

Tara: Not to call you mad.

Kathleen: Not the worst thing I've been called. I have a notebook, I have notes. I'm trying things, seeing what works, what doesn't work, and just doing it as if I were in my own home kitchen.

Tara: And the great thing is, when you finally have decided that something is working, you share it with the rest of us.

Kathleen: That's a fun time to bring the platter out to the office from the kitchen. And faces will light up.

Tara: Yeah.

Kathleen: Smells will waft.

Tara: When Kathleen walks down the little office hallway with a platter of something, everyone just swarms and what is this? It's like we've never eaten before. You've been doing this for a while now. Do you have any favorites that you've helped to develop?

[Music transition.]

Kathleen: I am very passionate about our Peanut Butter Jar Overnight Oats. It takes a jar, an almost empty jar of one of your favorite Trader Joe's Peanut Butters, and you use that as the vessel and the flavoring base of your overnight oats' recipe. You're using up the very last bits of the peanut butter out of the jar.

Tara: And that's such a cool idea. It's like there's always peanut butter that you just can't get to in the jar, right?

Kathleen: Yeah.

Tara: But I guess you add the liquid, you shake it up, you do all the things, when you're done, the jar is actually empty.

Kathleen: Synergy at its best.

Matt: And it's Peanut Butter Oats.

Tara: And it's Peanut Butter Oats.

Kathleen: And it's Peanut Butter Oats.

Tara: Any others?

Kathleen: A recent recipe, the Sicilian Tom Collins for a little evening cocktail consumption.

Tara: Would it be Tomaso?

Matt: Just in from Sicily.

Kathleen: Yeah.

Matt: So, tell us about this.

Kathleen: Our new Organic 100% Sicilian Lemon Juice has hit our shelves.

Matt: Yes.

Tara: Right.

Kathleen: I saw the bottle. What are we gonna do with this? We're gonna make a cocktail. A riff on a Tom Collins, which is a gin cocktail with lemon juice and something bubbly at the end. Swap in the Sicilian lemon juice and sweeten it with a rosemary simple syrup, just to kind of get the flavors of the region. That's it.

Tara: It worked?

Kathleen: It was really fun, really good.

Matt: That rosemary simple syrup has enough flavor, an interesting botanical flavor on its own, that, if someone were to forego the gin, wondering this still might be pretty tasty.

Kathleen: This would make a great mocktail.

Tara: So, you just use like a sparkling water or something with it?

Kathleen: The entire base would be sparkling water flavored with the simple syrup and the lemon juice.

Tara: Okay. I see another paper there in your pile of papers that might be one of my favorite things that you've ever done. The Sweet and Spicy Whipped Brie. That one kind of blew my mind.

Kathleen: Any way to get more brie into our diets, I'm gonna do it. A block of brie is fantastic. If you put it in a food processor and blend it, it becomes whipped.

Tara: I'd never even considered whipped brie as a thing.

Kathleen: It requires very little efforts.

Tara: It's really fabulous.

Matt: And for those of you wondering if that sounds a little too much like molecular gastronomy, it's approachable, it's easy. The ethereal cloud-like nature is within your grasp, you can do this. Kathleen, I'm wondering if you have a formula or a series of considerations when you're making a recipe.

Kathleen: Matt, I have so many questions I ask myself. One of them is, how many ingredients does this recipe require? The fewer, the better, the less things I have to pick up to make this recipe in its entirety.

Tara: That's a big deal, right? People want something that tastes good but isn't really labor intensive.

Matt: There's so many complex recipes out in the world, let's hear it for something a little simpler.

Tara: You know, it's six o'clock on a Tuesday, I need dinner.

Kathleen: Too long of an ingredient list is a deterrent for a lot of people when they look at recipes.

Tara: Yes, I'm raising my hand.

Matt: How many times do you make something to test it?

[Music transition.]

Kathleen: It absolutely depends. Sometimes, and I'm bragging here, sometimes it's a one and done. You got it, and it's good to go.

Matt: You're like the Beatles when you just walk into Abbey Road, then do it once.

Kathleen: Yeah.

Matt: It's a gold record.

Tara: Has anyone ever called you the Beatles before?

Kathleen: No.

Tara: Okay.

Kathleen: And I'm thrilled.

Tara: (laughs)

Matt: But sometimes it takes more than once.

Kathleen: Sometimes it takes more times than I'd care to share.

Matt: We'll keep that under wraps.

Tara: When something doesn't work the first time, how many times will you make it before you just say, "Ugh, it's not gonna happen?"

Kathleen: I stop around five times. Does not happen often. Sometimes it's just rethinking about it. Maybe it's a different product that needs to be involved. Maybe the cooking formula needs to change.

Tara: How do people find these recipes?

Kathleen: Very easily. [TraderJoes.com/recipes](https://www.traderjoes.com/recipes). And you can kind of search based on what you're looking for. Are you looking for a dinner idea? Do you want a drink option? Do you need an appetizer?

Tara: Okay.

Kathleen: Or if you wanna get kind of crazy, you can use one of these fun keywords that we have on here.

Tara: Like what?

Kathleen: Let's Bake! If that's your mood, then we have recipes for you.

Tara: Wait, what?

Matt: Wait, is that, do you have to type it or is it a thing ready to be clicked?

Kathleen: It's just right there on the left hand side.

Matt: It just says, Let's Bake!"

Kathleen: Let's Bake!

Tara: We have...

Matt: Click.

Kathleen: And we have some recipes for you.

Tara: This is not a 420 reference.

Matt: I know. I'm just wondering, is it sweet stuff? Is it savory stuff?

Kathleen: I use the Let's Bake! tag for cookies, cupcakes, sweet treats that go in the oven.

Matt: Got it.

Tara: Okay. So, these are tags.

Kathleen: These are tags.

[Computer keyboard typing in background.]

Tara: I actually just went to [TraderJoes.com](https://www.traderjoes.com) while we were sitting here. Here's a tag, Glass Half Full. What happens if I click on Glass Half Full?

[Mouse click.]

Tara: Oh, it's things in glassware.

Matt: A lot of beverages.

Tara: Okay. Love that. We have Jean's Favorite Martini. Awesome.

Kathleen: Yep.

Tara: Thank you for that one. We have Paloma Picanté. We have a Jam-Jar Cocktail. So, similar to the Peanut Butter Overnight Oats. Same idea.

Kathleen: Exactly.

Tara: Using the remnants.

Kathleen: Use up the very last bits. Serve it in the jar if you wish.

Tara: Okay. Brunch All Day, Alfresco Dining, The "X" Factor. Oh, these tags are fun. Did you expect this to be part of your job at Trader Joe's when you came to work here?

Kathleen: No, but it's my dream. It's fun. And it gets to work a lot of different parts of your brain and stomach that not all jobs require.

Tara: Yeah.

Matt: It's done in the service of fun, of information. We get the question all the time, even as a retailer, mostly of food and drink, "What do I do with this?" And you help answer that.

Kathleen: I do. And so do the crew members at your neighborhood Trader Joe's. They have so many ideas when you walk in, when you're checking out, they already have five things you can do with that bag of pasta or that jar of sauce.

Matt: Hey Kathleen, do you wanna help us close out this podcast?

Kathleen: Sure.

[Transition music to closing.]

Tara: That's our Special Episode ICYMI

Matt: In case you missed it.

Kathleen: Now?

Matt: Now.

Kathleen: That's how you find good Trader Joe's recipes.

Tara: Perfect.