

# Inside Trader Joe's Podcast Transcript Episode 55: Fall Shopping List

Tara: Let's check the Trader Joe's mail bag.

Matt: All right. Let's look for some product samples.

Tara: No, no, no, these are emails.

*[Incoming email. Light music begins.]*

Tara: Hey, Trader Joe's is the Pumpkin Ice Cream coming back?

Matt: Yes, yes, it is.

Tara: Okay, here's another one.

*[Incoming email.]*

Tara: Is the Pumpkin Cream Cheese coming back?

Matt: Yes, it is.

*[Incoming email.]*

Tara: What about the Pumpkin Madeleine Cookies?

Matt: Yes.

*[Incoming email.]*

Tara: Pumpkin Bagels?

Matt: Sure.

*[Incoming email.]*

Tara: Pumpkin Waffles?

Matt: Ah, absolutely.

*[Incoming email.]*

Tara: Pumpkin Samosas?

Matt: Yes, they're coming back and I'm getting an email theme here.

Tara: Here's one...

*[Incoming email.]*

Tara: ...any new Trader Joe's pumpkin products?

Matt: Any new Trader Joe's pumpkin products?

Tara: (chuckles) Okay, a few. And some other new products too, from the Trader Joe's mothership in Monrovia, California, it's our fall shopping list episode.

*[Music ends.]*

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

*[Theme music begins and 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 marketing product guy. Now we do get lots of questions about pumpkin season. Wondering 'when does pumpkin season start'? Well, pumpkin season starts kind of when we get those first, those early season pumpkin products in, but people are already clamoring for them.

Tara: We start getting those products in the store, kind of like the first and second week of September.

Matt: We're gonna cover as many as possible, but nowhere near all of them.

Tara: Okay, if you had to predict...

Matt: I do. And that's what we do around here. We place semi-educated bets on what customers will want and how much they'll want.

Tara: What new pumpkin products do you think will be really popular this year?

Matt: As in which pumpkin products will sell out quickly?

*[Theme music ends.]*

Tara: Kind of all of them, right?

Matt: Absolutely.

*[Light music begins.]*

Matt: Let's get started with a few of those new pumpkin products. You know, we have tried sticky toffee pudding over the years in different iterations, different forms. We have what I think is a recipe that will click.

Tara: It's a variation on sticky toffee pudding, but we're calling them Pumpkin Sticky Toffee Cakes because they're little individual sized cakes. Easy to make, pop it in the microwave. You have a quick dessert that tastes like, you know, it came from a five star restaurant kind of thing.

Matt: This will be in the freezer.

Tara: You heat them in the microwave for about a minute, and then you invert the individual serving onto a plate and there's a sort of an oozy caramel on the top when you invert it, they're kind of extraordinary. I mean, you could eat them naked.

Matt: Or you could be wearing clothes. You know, it's really up to you.

Tara: Yeah. (chuckles) Okay, you can eat them just as is, or you can add a scoop of vanilla ice cream or guild it a little bit with the pumpkin ice cream. Those should be in the stores, like I would say early to middle September.

Matt: I'm so hopeful that these find fans. I'm just so excited.

Tara: Okay, pumpkin. Let's keep going on pumpkin, Matt. Pumpkin Spiced Joe-Joe's Sandwich Cookies enrobed with pumpkin spice.

Matt: I think of them as like little candy bars.

Tara: Do you wanna try one right now?

Matt: I mean, you know, twist an arm. Go ahead.

Tara: All right.

*[Package opening.]*

Matt: You know, I'm really glad we hired on that foley artist team to replicate the package opening.

Tara: Right here. Grab a cookie.

Matt: Today's exercise...reaching for a cookie.

Tara: And so interestingly, they're kind of, they're topped with sea salt.

Matt: I mean, for those of you out there, who are the pumpkin spice fans, the aroma coming off, this cookie is all that and more.

*[Crunching of a cookie.]*

Tara: Yeah. That's a really good cookie. I mean, it's very sweet, but it has a tangy, you can...

Matt: Mm-hmm.

Tara: ...knowing that it's yogurt, you get that it's yogurt because there's a tanginess that kind of hits like on the back of your tongue.

Matt: The outer, yeah, that outer edge of your tongue and the salt hits.

Tara: And the salt. That's a really good cookie.

*[Transition to next product].*

Matt: Now you know Linus, he waited for the great pumpkin. I'm waiting for a squash delicata. Delicata squash is that roughly cylindrical, somewhat striped, ridged squash. It is a winter squash, but it's not a hard squash. Really easy to slice, really easy to clean the seeds and even easier to cook. You could do the sheet pan roasting. You could, you know, cook it up stovetop on a pan, browning each side. They cook relatively quickly because they're soft and it's beautiful as well. You know, delicata squash roasted and tossed with that Pumpkin Chipotle Sauce would be fantastic. But delicata squash is just such a great side dish. And it feels like if you threw that alongside your standby, go-to dinner menu options, you've just turned that somewhat boring or old hat menu into a fall menu.

Tara: I look forward to the return of delicata squash every fall. Not surprisingly, from me, I will tell you that these are also really easy to make in an air fryer.

Matt: Eat more squash. It's so good.

*[Small transition.]*

Tara: We have a couple of other squash...squashy things here, Matt. I wanna talk first about the Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese. Even though it's only in stores, basically in the fall, it shows up on our Customer Choice Awards every year as a top five favorite because people buy enough of it to stock their freezers for months. It's Mac and cheese, but it also has the addition of butternut squash puree, and some great seasonal spices. And it just elevates what is a very simple dish to something that's kind of on the verge of extraordinary.

Matt: Yeah, and I mean, easy to pair with lots of stuff.

Tara: Or you could just, you know, enjoy it as a main course with a little salad on the side, too.

Matt: So now this is gonna lead us to somewhere else.

Tara: When we realized just how popular the Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese was, we thought, what about mac and cheese bites with this flavor? And so last year we introduced Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese Bites into the freezer case, and they also just went gang busters. Huge.

Matt: And that, you know, in hindsight, I guess that feels somewhat inevitable. But what wasn't guaranteed was how great they actually are.

Tara: It's creamy, it's crunchy on the outside. It's got a nice chew on the inside. It's really good. It's a fun appetizer. Again, if you wanna, if you take a box of these and split 'em between two people and have a salad on the side, like that's a fun dinner actually. And it's pretty filling.

Matt: That's a pretty treaty dinner.

Tara: Yeah, right? I think.

*[Music ends. Transition to Jasmine interview.]*

Tara: Hey Matt, before we leave the world of pumpkin, we have a special guest.

Matt: Some people never leave the world of pumpkin.

*[Light music begins.]*

Tara: Our friend, Jasmine.

Matt: Jasmine!

Tara: Category manager of grocery here at Trader Joe's is back. Hello!

Jasmine: Hi, everyone.

Tara: Who's gonna talk to us about, not only one of our pumpkin products, but one of our other new products for the season.

Jasmine: Ready for the fall?

Tara: It's a crazy time.

Jasmine: I need some cool weather.

Tara: Well, that's, yes.

Matt: Good luck with that.

Tara: Yes.

Jasmine: I know.

Matt: And let us know.

Jasmine: (giggles)

Tara: Well, right now we wanna be here talking to you about Pumpkin Chipotle Roasting Sauce. This is a really cool product.

Matt: And totally weird because in classic Trader Joe's style, we've given you no help on the label whatsoever.

Tara: None. No. It's a jar, looks like a jar of salsa kind of, but it says Pumpkin Chipotle Roasting Sauce.

Matt: Good luck everybody.

Tara: Okay, tell us how to use it.

Jasmine: I think sometimes we leave the ideas off intentionally cuz we wanna give our customers creative freedom, right?

Matt: What exactly can you do with this? Kind of anything.

Jasmine: We actually took some boneless, skinless, chicken thighs and just put them in a single layer in a baking pan. And then we just dumped almost the entire jar on top of them. And then just kind of, you know, jostled them around until they were fully coated and then baked them. And they came out, I mean, they were just succulent. And I think you could, sometimes you could even pull it apart a little bit cuz they get really tender and you get that sweet pumpkin.

Matt: Oh man. So you're kind of almost like a pulled chicken like barbecue situation. That would be a great sandwich.

Tara: Wow, oh yeah on our Aloha Rolls. I like making sliders with the Aloha Rolls cause you can make a whole loaf at a time. Just like cut them in half and then you spread whatever you want in your sandwich across the whole loaf bottom.

Matt: That is a cool...that's a hack if I've ever heard one.

Tara: It is, right?

Jasmine: Can I add one more thing about that preparation?

Matt: If you really have to.

Jasmine: I have to cuz this is like the crème de la crème because at the end, when...

Matt: That's what we've been waiting for. You've been holding out all this time.

Jasmine: So when you take it out of the oven you kind of get this more caramelized version of the sauce that's sweeter, and deeper in flavor. Let's say you pull apart the chicken, you can put that sauce back on there and it gives it an even greater depth of flavor. So you could almost use it like as a topping.

Matt: That's the best stuff.

Jasmine: It's so good. It's delicious.

Matt: This is a really great sauce cuz I'm thinking of starting to have plans for entertaining. A classic party appetizer, little meatballs and some kind of sauce. We've got lots of great types of meatballs in the frozen section. Any of those slowly simmered in this Pumpkin Chipotle Sauce would be fantastic.

*[Jar opening noise].*

Tara: Oh, that smells so good.

Matt: If you wanted to go sheet pan roasting or roast in like a cast iron pan, any kind of root vegetables, even some squash, get them roasted, and then toward the end of that roasting, pour this sauce over, toss 'em around to get 'em even coated, back in the oven just for a few minutes. Take the challenge, try this sauce. It's gonna be great.

Tara: The next thing we wanna talk to you about is the Organic Maple Vinaigrette Dressing.

Jasmine: Yes.

Tara: That sounds so good.

Jasmine: It's delicious. It's very sweet.

Tara: Should we try it?

Jasmine: The easiest preparation is to pair it with like a dark leafy greens. Like the ones that are a bit more bitter, like the sweetness really cuts through.

Matt: I think this would be fun to, you know, if you had a bunch of roasted sweet potatoes.

Jasmine: Mm-hmm.

Matt: This would be fantastic.

Tara:            Alright, I'm gonna try to open it.

Jasmine:        I was meeting with our Vermont maple syrup supplier. He would tell me a lot of stories, but one of the ones he told me was, you know, how many different uses they had of maple syrup? I mean, they would even add it to bolognese. It's typical to like where you would add sugar. And he told me that his mom used to make a maple vinaigrette. And I asked him, I said, "What does that entail?" And he kind of just said, "You take some olive oil, you add maple syrup, maybe some lemon juice for acidity and some herbs." And I'm like, "Oh my God, that's a wonderful idea for us to.."

Matt:            Well, thanks, syrup guy.

Jasmine:        I know, right?

Matt:            Yeah.

Tara:            Syrup guy had a good idea, this is delicious. I mean, it tastes like maple syrup, but as a vinaigrette. I mean it's, I'm gonna try that tossed with delicata squash, actually.

Matt:            Yeah.

Jasmine:        I love delicata squash.

Matt:            Yeah I think this is gonna be a hit with roasted vegetables.

Tara:            That's due to show up in stores kind of like early September, right?

Matt:            The first week of September is what we're planning on.

Tara:            Hey, while we have you here...

Jasmine:        Yeah, of course.

Tara:            Are there any other products that might not be on our list of featured things today that you're excited about for the fall?

Jasmine:        So I was actually just gonna say...

Matt:            Okay, so here is Jasmine's secret fall pick to click. Take it, Jasmine, go for it. Drum roll, please.

*[Drum roll.]*

Jasmine:        Crunchy Chili Cranberry Orange and Onion in Olive Oil with Dried Bell Peppers and Brown Sugar.



Matt: Who says brevity is the source of all wit? It has a super long name. We almost couldn't fit it on the label.

Tara: Yeah, it's so good.

Jasmine: This is a game changer.

Matt: Whoa.

Tara: Oh.

Jasmine: No, it really is like, if you don't...

Matt: For whom?

Jasmine: For me.

Matt: Okay.

Jasmine: And hopefully for many other people.

Matt: That's the spirit.

Jasmine: Honestly, it's a great, great topping. And I love the sweetness that you get from the cranberries, cuz they're fairly large size pieces so you get like that chew and then that sweetness.

Tara: How about some like, um, little potatoes tossed in that and roasted on a sheet pan, just roasted potatoes with that level of cranberry orange.

Matt: Just for the heck of it, roast up a giant batch of tater tots and then pour that on top and like shake 'em around in that. And have spicy cranberry orange tater tots to welcome fall.

Jasmine: I just eat sides usually during Thanksgiving. And then I'll like have a little bit of turkey, but I think my life is gonna change.

Tara: That's not coming till later in the fall, right?

Jasmine: I wanna say end of October.

Tara: Yeah.

Jasmine: It's like hot off the presses.

Tara: Thank you, Jasmine.

Jasmine: Thank you so much.

Matt: Thanks.

Jasmine: Thanks for having me.

Matt: Yeah.

Jasmine: Happy fall.

*[Music ends. Transition out of Jasmine interview.]*

Tara: In the words of Theresa, dairy section leader at the new Trader Joe's in Parker, Colorado.

Matt: Now that's in episode 53.

Tara: Right. She said oat beverage is the star of the dairy section.

*[Music begins.]*

Matt: These days it really is and look no further for proof than the return of the Maple Oat Beverage.

Tara: I've spoken to a lot of people who love this product and who get really excited when it comes back into the store in the fall. It's vegan. It's lactose free. It's dairy free.

Matt: When you hear from people who are excited to have this come back, how are they using it? Are they just drinking it?

Tara: No, it's mostly in coffee drinks. Like a maple latte.

Matt: I know maple oat latte sounds so cool.

Tara: It sounds fancy, right?

Matt: Totally.

Tara: The Maple Oak Beverage, that'll be back in stores around mid-September. So there's more maple coming, Matt.

Matt: Thankfully.

Tara: Pretty good stuff.

Matt: Take a trip with us back to the frozen aisle to take a look at some Salted Maple Ice Cream.

Tara: Yes, please. You know what, Matt? I forgot I have a sample of this. You wanna try it?

Matt: Sure.

Tara: Okay. I'm gonna go get it. I'll be right back.

Matt: Alright.

*[Puts down microphone, walks away in background.]*

Matt: So, yeah. I'm technically speaking this would be considered a super premium ice cream because of the amount of butter fat and what's known as overrun. Overrun is the amount of air whipped into ice cream. This has very little air so it's a heavy ice cream. It's dense and creamy.

Tara: Here you go. Spoon. You go first.

Matt: I see like a little sort of like a little maple swirl kind of thing here.

Tara: It's like a ribbon, a ribbon of mapley goodness.

Matt: That might be the technical term. That is wonderful.

Tara: That is really good.

Matt: I mean this just feels like a New England getaway in a pint of ice cream to me and I think that the salt is the magical key to this thing.

Tara: Important to note, there is maple syrup in the ice cream, so it's not, it's not just a maple flavored ice cream. It contains maple syrup.

Matt: And you can taste it.

Tara: You can taste it. And not all things that claim to be maple ice cream will have maple syrup in them.

Matt: All right, class spoons down.

Tara: Okay. Wow.

Matt: Is that the last of our maple?

Tara: It's the last of our maple. Hey, what's next on the list?

Matt: There's a lot going on here. This is a Cinnamon Roll Blondie Bar Baking Mix.

Tara: These are so delicious. When we had these at the tasting panel, I think everyone was like, "Wait a minute, what is this?"

Matt: This screams for some sort of brunch type of scenario.

Tara: And if you serve them warm, they're a little gooey. They just have that extra, extra oomph of a freshly baked cinnamon roll.

Matt: The cinnamon roll part of that feels more breakfast-y but this would absolutely work well as dessert. I'm thinking this would be a fun thing...grab a box, bake up a batch for the guy across the street who always calls you when your trash cans are out for too long. Um, this would be fun.

Tara: You are a good neighbor, it sounds like.

Matt: So is the guy across the street. What else can we make? I'm feeling like I need a project or a little kit. Something we can really dig our hands into.

Tara: Okay, we totally have that.

*[Music transition.]*

Tara: So here's the backstory. For years we have been trying to find a way to bring in a caramel apple. The apples that are already done and ready to take home, they're gonna go bad in a couple days. Like they don't last. They don't have a shelf life that makes sense for us. The kits...they have ingredients that we don't allow in our private label product. They're just types of preservatives or artificial colors or flavors or things that we just don't use. This year we finally made it happen.

*[Upbeat announcement horns.]*

Matt: We are all on the edges of our seats.

Tara: Okay, this is Trader Joe's Caramel Apple Dipping Kit.

*[Ta-da horns.]*

Matt: Finally!

*[Upbeat music begins.]*

Tara: So, it's a box. It's a 16 ounce box, right? You open up the box. It's got a little lid on it.

Matt: What do we call this box?

Tara: Caramel Apple Dipping Kit.

Matt: Of course!

Tara: Yeah, that's it, right? Okay, and inside the box, you have a tray of caramel that you put in the microwave. There's a little package of chopped up nuts, another little package of fall colored sprinkles. And then you have six pretty substantial wooden sticks. The whole kit.

Matt: So just bring your own apples.

Tara: BYOA

Matt: I'd almost want to treat this as like a little mini fondue and use the sticks to like skewer up an apple slice and dip it in the caramel and then put it in the peanuts and the sprinkles and man, this is gonna be fun.

Tara: Yeah, just a super fun project to do with your kids or with your friends if you're, you know, having cocktails on a Friday. Like make caramel apples while you're having cocktails, why not?

Matt: Sure, absolutely. That makes me think of Raclette. Like fun things that you use a little bit of heat that are kind of cocktail parties.

Tara: Wait, Raclette, are those the people who do the high kicks?

Matt: Yes, the Raclettes. You can smell 'em a mile away. Raclette is that classic Alpine cheese. The classic preparation you heat it up over boiled potatoes, with cornichons or gherkins, and maybe some charcuterie. This is a classic wintertime dish. It kind of makes me think of the chalet life. And this is from France. It's real Raclette cheese and it's conveniently sliced.

Tara: You know, traditionally it gets heated and scraped. But here, instead of having a huge wheel that has to be heated and scraped, we're delivering slices. So really you're just melting.

Matt: It's kind of like deconstructed fondue. It's a rich creamy cheese. So some of those acidic things like a little cornichon pickle are a really nice counterpoint, a good foil to that richness.

Tara: It's a loved product at Trader Joe's. And how do I know that? If it weren't something that people responded really positively to on a seasonal basis, it certainly wouldn't keep coming back year after year after year.

Matt: We're heading into that stage of the program here.

Tara: We've saved it for last. Wine or some cocktails.

Matt: We've done a huge long standing business with the producer of the Ferme Julien wines from France. We have a Ferme Julien Sparkling Rose. This is made for us by a very well renowned producer in France. You might know from a Châteauneuf-du-Pape name

Château Beaucastel. These are those people. They absolutely know what they're doing. It pairs really well with so many foods. This would be equally at home at a brunch setting, as it would as in aperitif. It would be great with cheeses and fruits and charcuterie. Phenomenal value here.

Tara: Early September it's coming back. I think it kind of comes and goes.

Matt: Shipping things around the world these days is a complicated game but yeah I'm thinking early September, that's what it looks like.

Tara: If you shop for wine at Trader Joe's, you've probably run into our Reserve Wines. We've never had a wine in one of our Reserve Labels from Spain. Yeah, this particular wine is from the Cariñena region of Spain. The Spanish equivalent of what the Napa Valley has been to California and the U.S. It's just kind of like that hub of where great stuff is happening.

Matt: This Reserve Garnacha Lot 230, this is a steal deal. Garnacha also known as Grenache, a phenomenal grape and a backbone grape of lots of great wines coming out of Europe. Were this to be your introduction to Spanish wine to Garnacha from Spain, what a treat.

Tara: I'm gonna say that would taste really, really good with the roasted chicken thighs with the Pumpkin Chipotle Roasting Sauce that Jasmine mentioned to us. I bet that would be delicious.

Matt: That would be a nice combo. This next wine this time we're going to Argentina to the Uco Valley. We have a Grand Reserve Malbec Lot 111. Malbecs have been finding favor with American wine drinkers for quite some time.

Tara: Yeah, it's a really impressive wine. It's so deeply, purpley red that it's striking just to look at. And then when you get a chance to have a taste of it, there's all these sort of complex layers of flavors and it's kind of lush on your palette.

Matt: This is gonna need some big food flavors to stand up like grilled and/or braised red meats. This is going to work really well with that cuz it's a big, big flavorful wine.

Tara: It's almost embarrassing to see how many fantastic wines we have on this list to feature.

Matt: And it's just a handful, literally, of all the great things that we've got coming.

Tara: We have two Platinum Reserve wines to talk about, and that's very unusual to have multiple Platinum Reserves in the store at the same time. One is a Cabernet and one is a Petit Verdot which I don't think we've ever done a Platinum Reserve Petit Verdot.

Matt: Not that many people are familiar with it. It's often used as a blending component in red wines. It adds a lot of great structural depth and depth of flavor. This

particular expression, this is a Platinum Reserve Petit Verdot. It's from the Napa Valley. We call it Lot 105. It's 95% Petit Verdot and about 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, really a fun, fun wine and I think what would be fun taste this alongside another red wine maybe even the Trader Joe's Platinum Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon from the Stags Leap District Lot 104. So you could taste Lot 104 next to lot 105 and see what the differences are. And I think that that would be really cool because that Stags Leap District Cab, they grow some phenomenal wines that command staggering prices. Not so much here. This is cool and this is gonna sell I would bet really quickly.

Tara: This is the thing about all of the wines in our reserve program is none of them are meant to last forever because wines change year to year. So we buy what we can get. We can't predict what's gonna be back from year to year.

Matt: So man, I mean those are all expressions of the phenomenal work that the wine team is doing, bringing amazing things at really incredible prices to your neighborhood store.

*[Music ends. Transition.]*

Matt: So if you like beer...

*[Upbeat music begins.]*

Matt: This is from the campanology or the school of bell-ringing brewery. And this is a Coffee Peanut Butter Cup Porter. And this is a serious sipper. I think it's 9% alcohol by volume. So this is almost like a dessert beer.

Tara: It is a delicious beer. It does taste like dessert.

Matt: It actually has peanut powder thrown into the malted grains when they're brewing it and it's absolutely meant for sharing. It's in a 22 ounce bottle. So that is great to share with you know three or four folks.

*[Music transition.]*

Tara: We're doing some really fun things in the spirits world. One of those is coming back for maybe its fourth or fifth year seasonally. It's a Pumpkin Spice Cream Liqueur.

Matt: Yeah I'm thinking like if you wanted to bookend your day with pumpkin spice lattes this would be like the evening nightcap version with decaf of course.

Tara: Sure. I've had it in coffee as an evening sipper.

Matt: Sweet, creamy.

Tara: Yep.

Matt: I've heard of even pouring this on ice cream as sort of a grown up dessert. I think a lot of folks will be glad to hear it's coming back.

Tara: Let's talk about rum.

Matt: Let's talk about rum. It's basically fermented sugar cane juice. So as a thing it can be relatively innocuous firewater if it's not given some special handling. And what we have to offer here is a five year old, a five year aged rum from Panama. It's aged in bourbon barrels and then those barrels are brought up to North America to Sonoma. And that rum is transferred from bourbon barrels into wine barrels where it gets a finishing age process. And the depth of flavor is really interesting. It's not just a hot spirit. And while you could mix this into a mixed drink, I think of this as almost like a sipping tequila or a sipping scotch. This would be probably best enjoyed on its own.

Tara: If you shop at a Trader Joe's that can and does sell spirits, that should show up around early September.

Matt: Early September, wow.

Tara: There's a lot happening in September. And this list was not comprehensive. I know it seemed long, but there are so many more new products coming into stores this fall. Many, many more. Check out the Fearless Flyer, keep an eye on our Instagram page. Or better yet, take a leisurely stroll through your neighborhood Trader Joe's. Maybe ask the crew what they like.

Matt: They're always glad to help.

*[Music ends.]*

Tara: Okay, it is time for us to go.

*[Closing music begins.]*

Matt: After all that wine, the beer...maybe we should call a cab.

Tara: Ernie Sauvignon? No sorry. (laughs)

Matt: (laughs)

Tara: Okay, get the next episode of Inside Trader Joe's to you by hitting 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.