

*dessert*



# Sweet flavor trends

*savory*

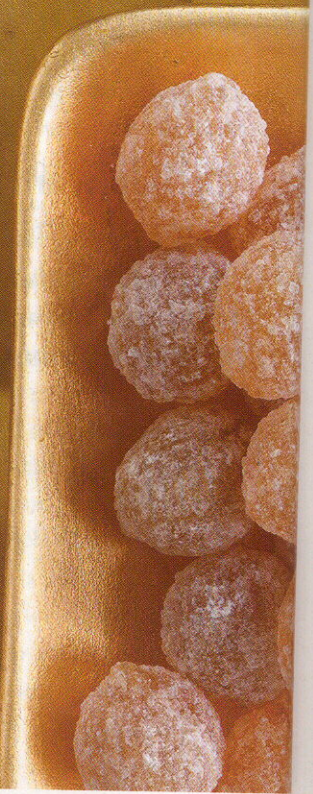
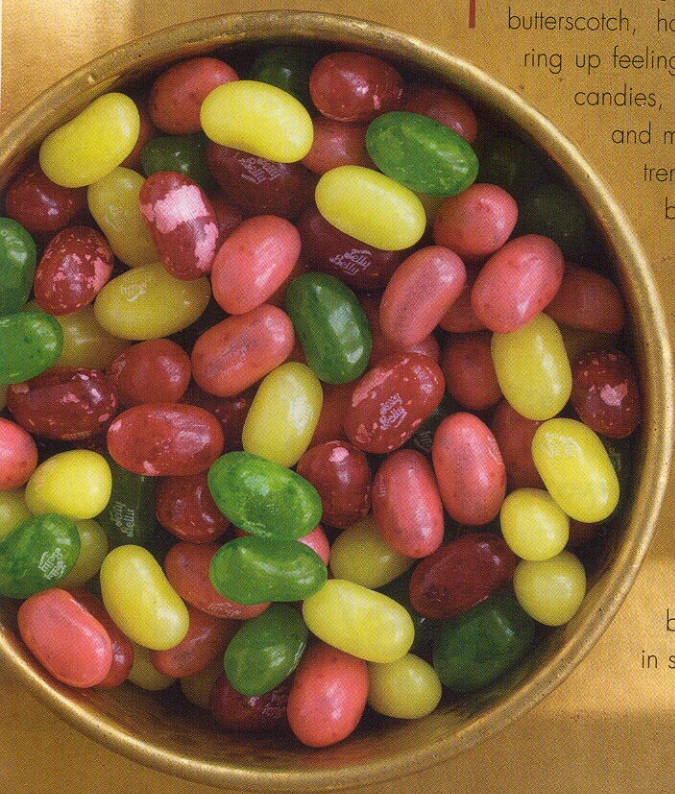
Candy and chocolate makers are finding inspiration in everything from vegetables to honey to old-fashioned desserts.

BY NICOLE POTENZA DENIS

There are a lot of things making candy and chocolate more intriguing this season. Classic ingredients such as butterscotch, honey, brown sugar and maple are stirring up feelings of comfort and are being seen in hard candies, jellybeans and old-fashioned caramels and marshmallows. Vegetables are becoming a trendy ingredient for chocolate treats. (Don't be surprised if your customers begin asking for sweet potatoes in their chocolate this fall or crunchy chocolate-covered beets or edamame.) Dessert flavors once only seen in cakes, pies and ice cream (think Key lime pie or banana split) are making their way into caramels and lollipops, and cocktail flavors are turning up in jellybeans, taffy and jazzed-up nuts.

Discover these latest flavor trends and be the first to tell your customers what is hot in sweets this season.

*comfort*



*cocktail*

## Comfort Candy

Kara Nielsen, trendologist at the Center for Culinary Development in San Francisco, touts 'brown' flavors such as butterscotch, caramel, honey, maple and brown sugar for evoking a familiar security for consumers who want a sweet treat. "People still seek out comfort in their food choices, and sweets are no different," she says.

Artisan Candies in San Jose, Calif., is one company that's built an entire line around these classic brown flavors. The company was founded on its soft caramels and now has a product range that includes brown sugar-based fudge, brown sugar fudge pops, chocolate-covered caramels on a stick (one of its best sellers), maple-based pecan brittles and honey-sweetened marshmallows. "Our company has taken off due to the rising popularity of these old-fashioned

brown flavors," says Kristen Scott, owner and founder. Scott notes that there is a renewed interest in caramels, especially for older customers because the flavors remind them of their childhood.

Brown flavors, by way of Vermont maple and honey, are also highly regarded at Lake Champlain Chocolates. The Burlington, Vt.-based company's Honey Caramels and Maple Crunch are the most popular flavors in its Chocolates of Vermont line. The chocolates even illustrate the ingredients inside by showcasing an

image of a honeycomb and a maple leaf on the product.

Honey, in particular, is coming up a winner in a variety of other sweets. In a poll of more than 11,000 Jelly Belly fans, honey was recently voted as the preferred flavor. Honey Bean, made with real wildflower honey, is the 92nd flavor in the Fairfield, Calif. company's bean repertoire. "There is huge consumer interest in honey flavors," says Tomi Holt, director of communications. According to Holt, honey shows up regularly in consumer feedback on the company's website.

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## CANDY COUNTER

Honey Lovers, a heart-shaped fruit chew line made with real honey from Gimbal's Fine Candies in South San Francisco, is available in 16 flavors including Pomegranate Honey, Honey Vanilla and Huckleberry Honey. The company, which manufactures in an allergen-free facility, touts a 25 percent RDA of vitamin C in its Honey Lovers. It also donates five percent of Honey Lovers' proceeds to the University of California Davis Honey Bee Research.

Honey has inspired Nobel Ingredients, the U.S. subsidiary of French chocolate maker Michel Cluizel, to carry Tal, a line of French hard candies made with premium honey. "Honey is a natural sweetener that has the particularity of being not too sweet," says Jacques Dahan, president of Nobel Ingredients. "It also

is a great carrier of flavor." The company's bestseller is Tal Honey Balls but it also carries popular flavors such as Rose, Mint Garden, Green Tea and Cranberry.

Chocolate and honey is a hit with customers of all ages. For example, it is found in new products from the Hammons Product Company of Stockton, Mo. The company has been harvesting black walnuts since 1946, and is now offering its Black & Gold Blend, a savory confection combining the walnuts with 60 percent cacao dark chocolate and a sugar and honey glaze.

The combination of honey and chocolate is showing some interesting merchandising potential. Chuao Chocolatier's newest creation, Honeycomb, a 60 percent cacao bar made with caramelized honey, complements a variety of beverages as well as cheese. "The bar goes well with craft

Clockwise from top: Artisan Candies' Fudge Pops, Chuao Chocolatier's Honeycomb bar, Artisan Candies' Maple Pecan Brittle, Tal Honey Balls and Artisan Candies' Caramels.



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