



Modern consumers crave extraordinary experiences, and the hunger for novelty has made chocolate confectionery the perfect canvas for flavor experimentation.



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Forward Thinking: Unwrapping Confectionery Trends

Innovation in the candy aisle is fueled by novel tastes, textures, collaborations, and functional ingredients.

According to the National Confectioners Association (NCA)¹, confectionery sales totaled \$54.2 billion in 2024. Chocolate accounted for \$28.1 billion, followed by non-chocolate candy at \$21.7 billion, and gum at \$4.4 billion. In 2024, Valentine's Day, Easter, Halloween, and the winter holidays made up 62.3% of all confectionery sales.

The latest trend is Summerween, where brands sell Halloween-themed candy early. The NCA suggested it as a potential fifth major candy holiday. Walmart reports that 1 in 3 shoppers begins their Halloween shopping between June and August². Similarly, Mars' second annual *Tricks, Treats and Trends* report found that 1 in 5 American Halloween celebrants plan for the holiday early (two months or more in advance). Gen Z (1.5x) and millennials (1.6x) are more likely to get a head start on the season³.

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And Americans are buying more candy, according to the NCA, with annual dollars spent per buyer increasing 4%. They use these purchases as permissive indulgences, with possible health benefits on the horizon for the category. In fact, 62% of participants said that they believe better-for-you candy exists. Innovation in the candy aisle is fueled by novel tastes, textures, collaborations, and functional ingredients.

Taste& Texture

Like other categories, consumers are demanding, and brands are vying for their attention and looking to engage and maintain them. Flavor and texture are two key components of the candy-eating experience. Textures can range from crunchy to chewy to smooth and airy. According to a Collage Group survey⁴, 63.4% of Gen Z respondents enjoy soft textures in sweet snacks, while 58% love chewy ones. Furthermore, 41.5% of participants favor crispy experiences. Candy brands are experimenting with unique flavors and textures to appeal to this audience.

Candy is often associated with youth and nostalgia. Fun, playful, and interactive gummies are becoming increasingly popular, driven by social media. Peelerz by Amos blew up social media because of its interactive nature. Shaped and flavored like fruit, the candies are “peelable fruit gummies made with real fruit juice, featuring a dual texture - a soft, bouncy outer layer and a solid gel center.” The Mango variant went viral and in 2024 was awarded the Most Innovative New Product Non-Chocolate Candy at the Sweets and Snacks Expo. Other flavors include Banana, Grape, Kiwi, Lychee, Orange, Peach, and Pineapple.

Gupperz by Velondi Brands Inc. are “designed to captivate consumers with innovative flavors, shapes, textures, and exciting liquid centers.” For example, the Gupperz Poppin Pickles are a sweet, pickle-flavored 3D-pickle-shaped gummy filled with a juicy sour pickle flavor that bursts in your mouth. Other 3D filled gummies include Boba Tea Blast with four flavors: Matcha, Milk Tea, Strawberry, and Vanilla, Confetti CakeSplosion (birthday cake with strawberry inside), Sour Squirt Grenade (sour apple) and Strawberry Milk Splash (strawberry). This summer, Rockin’ Root Beer Float (root beer) and Ripe Fruit Rush with four flavors: Blue Raspberry, Grape, Strawberry and Watermelon, joined the lineup.

Stuffed Puffs added Gummy Fuzions to its portfolio, described as “a mixture of different layers - bold coatings, fusions of flavor, and a burst of gummy in every piece.” The Gummy Fuzions are available in Chili Mango, Fruity Punch, Mixed Berry, Sour Berry and Sour Watermelon flavors. Each candy highlights a sour, fruity



Gupperz creates 3D gummies in innovative flavors, shapes, and textures filled with liquid centers.

center covered in a soft gummy candy and then wrapped with either a crunchy or sour coating.

In the UK, Chupa Chups added Pinkis, a new variant to its jellies line. Pinkis are bright pink with a jelly-like consistency and strawberry flavor. Retired NFL athlete Tom Brady launched GOAT Gummies, a line of organic, vegan gummy snacks in three varieties: Sweet Rush, Sour Burst and Tropic Fusion. The gummies are manufactured in France, made with real fruit, and contain no artificial sweeteners, dyes, or flavors. GOAT gummies are available exclusively through Gopuff.

Like gummy candies, freeze-dried candies have taken the internet by storm and exploded in 2024. According to Grand View Research⁵, the global freeze-dried candy market is expected to reach \$2.4 billion by 2030 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.5%. Freeze-dried candy provides a novel texture and intense flavor experience, and brands are taking notice.

Sow Good, Inc., a pioneer in freeze-dried candies, launched in 2023. At the 2025 Sweets& Snacks Expo, Sow Good, Inc., introduced Freeze Dried Caramel and Raw Caramel varieties. Jolly Rancher launched its signature flavors, Blue Raspberry, Green Apple and Watermelon, into a Freeze Dried range. The “light,

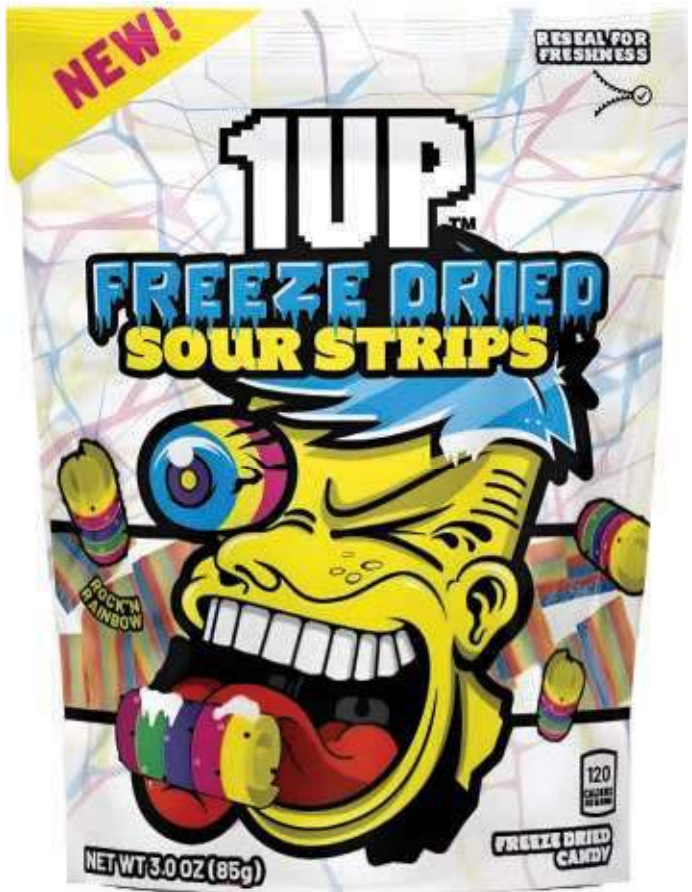
ultra-crunchy bites puff up in size and deliver a punch of flavor with every bite.”

This year in the UK, United Food Brands launched Tasty Vibes, a freeze-dried candy line in two varieties: Sweet Mix and Sour Mix. 1UP Candy debuted its Crunchy (Freeze-Dried) Sour Strip range in four flavors: Blue Raz, Green Apple, Rainbow and Strawberry at the Sweets& Snacks Expo. The “chewy sour treat is transformed into a crispy snack that delivers a dynamic sour pop followed by a smooth, fruity melt.” For Kool-Aid’s 2025 Spooktastic Halloween Candy Box, Hilco added two new flavors inspired by its Ghou-Aid juice. The Kool-Aid Ghou-Aid Mouth Bites are described as “crispy, crunchy popping candy bites” offered in Ominous Orange, Goulish Grape and Rotten Green Apple flavors, while the Kool-Aid Ghou-Aid Popping Candy is available in Zom-Berry.

Craving Chocolate

In addition to non-chocolate candy introductions, chocolate brands are launching new flavors inspired by cookies and desserts. Earlier in the year, Butterfinger dropped a Salted Caramel Butterfinger, the first new flavor in a decade. It “keeps the same iconic crispety, crunchety, peanut-buttery core, now wrapped in a salted caramel-flavored coating.” This summer, Butterfinger rolled out a new Marshmallow flavor, which is similarly wrapped in a marshmallow-flavored coating. Next year, a French Toast flavor is expected to launch.

Twix unveiled a Snickerdoodle flavor, which features its signature crunchy cookie, caramel, and milk chocolate combined with a cinnamon-sugar swirl of snickerdoodle-flavored caramel. Hershey’s introduced a limited-edition Milk Chocolate Caramel bar as well as Cinnamon Toast Crunch-flavored Hershey’s Kisses, which blends smooth white creme with swirls of cinnamon sugar and graham-flavored cookie bits. In Europe, Cadbury released the Cadbury Dairy Milk Summer Edition Bars in four limited-edition cold-activated



1UP Candy Freeze-Dried Sour Strips come in four flavors: Blue Raspberry, Green Apple, Rainbow and Strawberry. Rainbow flavor shown; courtesy of 1UP Candy.

wrappers. When stored in the refrigerator, the wrappers change to a deep blue color and reveal hidden designs like deck chairs, umbrellas, kites and inflatables. Within this collection, Cadbury also introduced a new Iced Latte flavor.

Candy Collabs

Collaborations seem to be taking over limited-edition food and beverage launches, and candy is no exception. Limited-time offerings add excitement and a sense of urgency for consumers.

For the first time, two iconic brands, Trolli and Mountain Dew have joined forces for an unexpected collaboration: Trolli x Mountain Dew Sour Brite Crawlers gummies and Mountain Dew Zero Sugar x Trolli Cherry Lemon. The Mountain Dew Trolli Sour Bite Crawlers come in three Mountain Dew-inspired flavors: Original Citrus, Original Citrus Blue Raspberry and Original Citrus Cherry. Similarly, in July, Baskin-Robbins and Sydney Sweeney teamed up on the Sweet on Sydney Menu, which featured an



Butterfinger introduced Salted Caramel, followed by Marshmallow, the first new flavors in a decade.

ice cream and beverage offering. Sydney's Signature Scoop highlighted Rainbow Sherbet in a chocolate-dipped waffle cone with rainbow sprinkles and gummy bear minis. Sydney's Signature Fizz blends Rainbow Sherbet with Starry lemon lime soda, topped with gummy bear minis.

Goetze's Candy Co., Inc. and Guinness Open Gate Brewery Baltimore brought back Caramel Creams Ale. Not a collaboration, but a notable new soda brand, Candy Lips, released five candy-inspired flavors: Bubble Gum, Cotton Candy, Peach Rings, Sour Gummy Worm and Watermelon Gummy Slices.

In partnership with Sony Pictures Television's game show *Wheel of Fortune*, Dylan's Candy Bar created seven collectible confections with a variety of different flavored gummies and chocolates. For example, the Snacktime Sweetness Paint Can features Fruity Gummy Pizza Slices, Cola Gummy Bottles, and Fruity Gummy Hot Dogs, while the Wheel-y Good Mega Coin contains an 8-inch, 10-ounce solid milk chocolate coin stamped and wrapped in a gold metallic wrapper with the "Something Sweet Is Spinning" tagline.

Tony's Chocolonely and cookie dough brand Hot Take Dough partnered on the limited-edition Tony's x Hot Take Dough S'more Cookie Pack. The bake-at-home

cookies blend Tony's S'mores Lil Bits (100% traceable milk chocolate, marshmallows, and graham cracker pieces) and Hot Take Dough's organic cookie dough (grass-fed butter and cage-free eggs). Seattle's Best Coffee branched out with Coffee Roast Mallows, a limited-edition variety pack of four coffee-inspired marshmallows in Light Roast, Medium Roast, Dark Roast and S'mores flavors crafted in partnership with XO Marshmallow. The marshmallows come with a full-size bag of Seattle's Best Coffee Campfire S'mores Flavored Ground Coffee.

Functional Candy

Functional food and beverages are on the rise, as consumers seek healthier lifestyles, as addressed in Trendincite's *Perfumer & Flavorist*⁶ "Forward Thinking: Functional Food & Beverage Developments" article, which appeared in the August 2021 publication. To satisfy consumer demand, candy and chocolate brands are incorporating functional ingredients like caffeine, vitamins, and protein into their formulas.

Lifestyle gamer brand Razer and Mars formed a joint venture to expand the Respawn by Razer product line featuring gum and mints co-created with gamers, designed to enhance gaming experiences. The gum is available in three flavors: Cool Mint, Pomegranate Watermelon and Tropical Punch, and is formulated with Vitamin B and green tea extract to maintain mental focus. The mints come in Blackberry Vanilla Vibe, Mango Habanero Fire and Watermelon Guava Rush flavors.

Neuro Gum unveiled a limited-edition collab with brand ambassador and investor Steve Aoki. The Neuro x Steve Aoki Energy & Focus Strawberry Cake Mints contain 20 mg of natural caffeine, L-theanine and B vitamins (B6 and B12) to enhance cognitive function and boost energy production. The UK brand Ruly launched two caffeine-infused lightning bolt-shaped candies in Berry Delicious and Tropical Crush varieties. "Designed to offer a sustained energy boost without the jitters often associated with sugary energy drinks," each pack contains 80 mg of caffeine, guarana and B vitamins.

The Functional Chocolate Company added the FunCho Kids collection in four varieties: Brainy, Carefree, Painfree and Sleepy, to its portfolio. The chocolates are specially crafted with ethically sourced ingredients and kid-friendly botanicals such as ginkgo biloba, rhodiola, bacopa, lemon balm, passion flower, chamomile, bromelain, turmeric and MSM to support focus, calm, energy and restful sleep. The chocolates are plant-based, gluten and cholesterol free, and made without artificial sweeteners, flavors, additives or preservatives.



In partnership with Sony Pictures Television's game show *Wheel of Fortune*, Dylan's Candy Bar created seven collectible confections.

Protein snack bar brand ONE partnered with Hershey's on the ONE x Hershey's Double Chocolate protein bar. The decadent bar features 18 g of protein and 1 g of sugar. Hormbles Chormbles "is not a protein bar but rather a candy bar that happens to have protein and includes whey crisps." The candy bar is 100 calories and features 10 g of protein and no sugar. It is formulated with a protein blend of whey protein isolate and milk protein isolate with allulose, modified plant fat (EPG), palm kernel oil, cocoa mass, Dutch process cocoa powder, natural flavor, sunflower lecithin, salt, monk fruit extract and steviol glycosides.

Sweet Future

Consumers enjoy chocolate, non-chocolate candy and gum as a treat. In 2024, 98% of households purchased confectionery at least once. Holidays drive consumer interest in chocolates and candy; 9 in 10 consumers like seasonal treats to reflect the holiday's shapes, colors, flavors, characters, and/or packaging¹. Often nostalgic, candy is fun, playful, and a multisensory experience. Consumers of all ages, particularly the younger demographic, seek interactive experiences with bold flavors, various textures, and unique formats.

According to Innova Market Insights⁷, modern consumers crave extraordinary experiences, and the hunger for novelty has made chocolate confectionery the perfect canvas for flavor experimentation. Gummies, freeze-dried candies, chocolate bars, and limited-edition and seasonal collaborations deliver the immersive experiences consumers crave. As consumers seek healthier lifestyles, functional candy will rise in popularity. Expect more novel, bold flavors and textures, and functional



The FunCho Kids collection of chocolates is specially crafted with ethically sourced ingredients and kid-friendly botanicals to support focus, calm, energy and restful sleep.

ingredients in a variety of formats to meet consumers' evolving needs.

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Courtesy of The Functional Chocolate Company