## Almonds + Chocolate - Innovation Meets Consumer Demand

As the confectionary industry continually innovates to meet new challenges and changing consumer demands, ingredients with natural, wholesome appeal like California almonds can help manufacturers deliver next-level products. We asked Lu Ann Williams, President of Innova Market Insight, about what the latest industry and consumer research says about how forward-thinking products combining almonds with chocolate can deliver what consumers are looking for.



What are the key demands of today's consumers?

WILLIAMS | Today's consumers want to make responsible, "better for you" food choices that are healthy and align with their "free-from" preferences, like gluten-free, lactose-free and clean-label. They equate clean-label with "goodness" in products, including chocolates, that are natural and have a short ingredient list.1 At the same time, consumers' desire for flavor and indulgence strongly influences their chocolate purchasing decisions.

How do almonds and chocolate meet consumer expectations for "better for you" products?

WILLIAMS | In the Almond Board of California's 2018 Global Chocolate Survey, consumers were asked to envision the ideal chocolate product. They named almonds as the most included ingredient and almond butter as a top filling for the first time since 2008. According to the research, almonds also outperform other nuts for making chocolate more nutritious (84%) and natural (76%).2

Innova's tracking of product launches shows that chocolate makers are communicating benefits such as reduced sugar content and no artificial ingredients on the label. Examples of new, innovative, "better for you" chocolate products with almonds include a gluten-free cherry almond carob bar and a vegan chocolate bar with fondant and almonds. Almonds also facilitate the shorter ingredient lists associated with clean products by offering multiple consumer-pleasing attributes in a single food.



Which chocolate product features connote indulgence?

WILLIAMS | Taste and texture are a big part of indulgence. The Almond Board's 2018 Global Chocolate Survey demonstrates this, with taste as the top consideration in snack chocolate decisions.2 Consumers value high-quality ingredients too. The survey also shows that indulgent emotional benefits such as happiness, cravings and relaxation are important considerations.2



Consumers name indulgence as the top reason to eat chocolate. In fact, the 2018 survey shows that four out of five consumers say chocolate is either their number one favorite snack or one of their favorites, when they are looking to indulge.2

What's next for almonds and chocolate?

WILLIAMS | Consumers are looking for unique and varied experiences in flavor, and chocolate is evolving beyond the traditional into more adventurous flavors and unexpected combinations. Texture claims associated with almonds, namely crunchy and crispy, are growing rapidly. We expect continued consumer interest in health and further product expansion in "better for you" features, including claims and ingredients such as clean, vegan and ancient grains.

Chocolatiers will continue to diversify to improve the healthiness of their products while also focusing on flavor and texture to capture consumers' interest. Including nuts such as almonds, with seeds and dried fruits delivers both health benefits and indulgent texture.2



## **About Innova Market Insights**

Innova Market Insights is a is a leading market research company, serving our customers with our unique and powerful Innova Database: the world's largest database for the food industry, used by leading companies in food ingredients and manufacturing for future success in the dynamic FMCG/ CPG industry.

<sup>1</sup>Essential Clean Label Chocolate Innovation with California Almonds. Innova Market Insights. 2018 <sup>2</sup>2018 Global Chocolate Survey. Sterling Rice Group. 2018

