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Trader joe's taste test of caramels

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Please find our original review, originally published on November 11th, 2015 below, republished with some new images because I just had to buy this thing again. Oooph! This review is going to set me back... Tonight I'm going to review 12 different caramels, thanks to this conveniently-packaged Trader Joe's Taste Test of Caramels kit. Trader Joe's Taste Test of Caramels The box for Trader Joe's Taste Test of Caramels kit reads: "We've assembled dark chocolate covered caramels and paired them with some of the finest unique ingredients. The question is... which is which? We've provided the answers inside, but we challenge you to test your taste buds!" Ok, I'm an absolute sucker for surprises, solving mysteries, and eating chocolate. The box encourages turning this into a social event by cutting the caramels into quarters, inserting toothpicks, having participants sample and write down observations, and then revealing the caramels' identities to award a winner. What the box doesn't advise is for one man to eat 12 caramels by himself and blog about it to a light audience, none of whom are concerned at all for his health. I'm going to try each caramel in order, record my guess, and then see how I did. The only problem is the front of the box gives the pool of possible flavors, and I already glanced at it. That's way too easy; I rather have no idea at all. And so I began to polish off a bottle of Jack Daniel's Tennessee Honey in order to forget everything. With the honey whiskey serving as a successful primer for the 92g of sugar I'm about to inhale, I'm ready to tackle Trader Joe's Taste Test of Caramels. Keep in mind I only get one quick shot at picking apart these flavors because you're only provided one of each caramel. Also keep in mind that I am feeling prettttty buzzed already. These reviews will be quick, dirty, and drunk. Trader Joe's Taste Test of Caramels Caramel #1: My first caramel has a light brown ribbon on top of the dark chocolate coating. This caramel tastes like... well, it tastes like caramel. A damn fine one. I forgot how good Trader Joe's caramels were. I'm not picking up on anything unique. I am quickly getting drunk, though. Maybe it's a fun trick where one of the caramels is actually caramel-flavored. My Guess: Caramel Answer: Vanilla (Bullshit) Rating: 7.5 out of 10 Caramel #2: The second caramel has a ribbon the same color as the dark chocolate coating. This baby tastes like straight coffee. Piece of cake. The flavors pair well together to taste like a Starbucks Mocha Frappuccino. My Guess: Coffee Answer: Double Espresso (Close enough) Rating: 8 out of 10 Caramel #3: The third caramel has some brown stripes on top. Whatever. There's something citrusy underneath the dark cocoa. Kinda leaning towards orange on this one; it's faint like orange zest. My least favorite so far, but it works. My Guess: Orange Answer: Stem Ginger (Wrong) Rating: 7 out of 10 Caramel #4: This caramel clearly has coconut on top. They're not even trying - definitely coconut. It tastes like an Almond Joy, only richer. Doesn't matter how drunk I am to nail this one. Feeling pretty confident going forward. My Guess: Coconut Answer: Coconut (Nailed it) Rating: 7.5 out of 10 Caramel #5: By the way, I should probably add that I've been taking gigantic sips of whiskey in between each caramel to "refresh my palate." Caramel #5 has a ton of salt crystals on top - a bit too much for my liking. I didn't get anything specific other than copious amounts of salt. Drunk Female would love this shit. My Guess: Too Much Salt Answer: Himalayan Salted (Yup) Rating: 6 out of 10 Caramel #6: The halfway point. This caramel has a fine white ribbon on top and my stomach is starting to hurt. Better drink more whiskey to take the edge off. DAYUM, this caramel is butterscotchy! Butterscotch with an extra burst of salt that I appreciate more than in the last caramel. This is my new favorite, but I am also drunker and food always tastes better when you're drunk. Definitely butterscotch, though. No question. My Guess: Butterscotch Answer: Maple (Dammit!) Rating: 8.5 out of 10 Caramel #7: I'm sitting at 50% correct and need to improve in the second half. I'm better than this. Caramel #7 has a brown drizzle on top. This is the funkiest one so far. It's a berry flavor; I just have no idea which one, or which state I live in. God I love Jack Daniel's. There's something else I can't put my finger on, but I like it. It's kind of earthy? I'm just going to guess blackberry. My Guess: Funky Blackberry Answer: Strawberry Black Pepper (WTF) Rating: 7 out of 10 Caramel #8: The eight caramel has a single brown line on top. Even I could have made this one prettier, and I'm hammered. It tasted like cinnamon at first, because I just switched over to Jack Daniel's Cinnamon Whiskey, because I finished the Tennessee Honey. I took a second bite and it just tasted like caramel. Whatever flavor it is, it isn't very strong. Maybe it actually is cinnamon, or cinnamon whiskey! My Guess: Jack Daniel's Cinnamon Whiskey Answer: Butterscotch (HOW) Rating: 5.5 out of 10 Caramel #9: I vowed to improve in the second half and haven't been right since. Is Taco Bell still open? Caramel #9 has a BEAUTIFUL chocolate drizzle star on its surface. 10 out of 10 artwork. It tastes like a chocolate caramel, only sweeter. Not overly-sweetened, just something a little extra that I like. What's sweeter than caramel? Maple was already used, so I'm just going to take a shot in the dark (of whiskey). Let's go with honey. My Guess: Honey Answer: Fig & Honey (THAT COUNTS) Rating: 7 out of 10 Caramel #10: That was a helluva guess, huh? Ok, I'm going undefeated the rest of the way. Caramel #10 has a bunch of crap on top. Hard to tell what it is because I'm going cross-eyed. Hard to tell what it tastes like too, because I'm about to black out. So much for going undefeated the rest of the way. This caramel blows. My Guess: No clue Answer: Blood Orange Balsamic (LOL) Rating: 5 out of 10 Caramel #11: This is the longest review I've ever written. If you made it this far, a shot of Jack Daniel's on me! Caramel #11 has an amorphous blob on top. It's hideous, so I feel like it understands me. It has a peppery kick. It's not habanero hot, but more like a chile pepper. My Guess: Chile Pepper Answer: Hot Chili (BOOM GOES THE DYNAMITE) Rating: 7 out of 10 Caramel #12: Thank God, the final caramel. I can't take any more sugar. But if I guess this one correctly, I'll be at .500. Hey, that would make me the greatest hitter of all-time if this were baseball. Drumroll, please... F*CK, I have no idea what this is. It's tart and I don't like it. I don't have a well-informed guess. Actually wait, yes I do. My Guess: Butt Answer: Toffee Apple (Pretty sure it was butt) Rating: 5.5 out of 10 WELP there you have it. I went 5-for-12, got drunk, and had a great time by myself with Trader Joe's Taste Test of Caramels. Though I only guessed 42% correctly, there were no other participants, so I WON! And this entire experience reminded me how good Trader Joe's caramels are, and how good whiskey is. If you have actual friends, a Taste Test of Caramels party would make for one helluva night. How Many Better Things I Could Have Done Tonight Rating: 4 out of 10 How Much Better Whiskey Makes Everything Rating: 9 out of 10 Overall Rating: 8 out of 10 To keep up with all of our products finds and Junk Bantering in real time, follow us on social media at the links below! Facebook: www.facebook.com/junkbanterblog Instagram: www.instagram.com/junkbanter Twitter: www.twitter.com/junkbanter Snapchat: [junkbanter](https://www.snapchat.com/add/junkbanter) © 1996-2014, Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates © 1996-2014, Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates Trader Joe's just dropped their 2023 holiday edition of their infamous Fearless Flyer. The front page of this successful piece of marketing is akin to what the New York Times would call "above-the-fold"; meaning, the products that are most prominently featured are considered top retail billing. I generally do a pretty terrible job propping up my creative resumé, but after seeing a product I designed and conceptualized nearly eleven years ago still resonating with one of the all-time retail greats, perhaps it's worth a post. For about a decade I was a senior creative at Trader Joe's. My core function was design, but also providing copy, naming conventions, product positioning, and other marketing creative support. (I love seeing people toting around TJ's reusable grocery bags I designed.) One of the things I appreciated about my function at Trader Joe's was the end-to-end ownership of my projects. One such project was the creative and design for a holiday item... "The 12 Days of Caramels", an assortment of chocolate caramels with varying flavor profiles. The structure of the box was long and narrow so this presented some challenges. I iterated on the design and presented my team with a work-in-progress prefacing the critique with, "I know this hasn't landed." My Creative Director kind of stared at the design with his hand on his chin before saying, "It looks like an Auto-Trader ad." The thing is, he wasn't wrong. But what I realized was, designing to the structure wasn't the problem. It was designing to a weak concept. Trader Joe's had plenty of other chocolate assortments in the line-up, but what made these unique were the interesting pairings... think stem ginger and strawberry black pepper. And then it hit me, what if this was made into a game that people could bring to a party? I came up with "Taste Test of Caramels." Conceptually, it worked perfectly with the structure because the design replicated a parlor board game. What I was previously struggling with suddenly "wrote itself". This was, of course, a radical shift in the product's positioning. At the time, the Category Manager and VP of Merchandising overseeing this product were both offline traveling abroad visiting with vendors. In good faith I ran the change past our VP of marketing. It was instantly approved with excitement. It sounds far-fetched, but I single-handedly executed every detail of this package. The copy. The art direction of the photography. The design. The illustrations. This was designed in 2012, so there are some things I might have done differently; however, for the most part I would say the design captures the spirit of the concept. Upon its debut, Taste Test of Caramels was the first holiday item to completely sell-through and continued to do so year-after-year. I think it's safe to assume that its top billing on the Fearless Flyer means it's, in fact, a Trader Joe's legacy holiday item. This is why creative is so important, but sadly, often ignored or given little value. I'm confident "12 Days of Caramels" would have been just another caramel assortment in the wind. In contrast, Taste Test of Caramels transcended the product with an additional form of engagement, and also made it non-denominational in the process. To move between items, use your keyboard's up or down arrows. The Motorsport Images Collections captures events from 1895 to today's most recent coverage. Discover The CollectionCurated, compelling, and worth your time. 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For \$5.99, you get a twelve pack of fine, dark chocolate-coated ooey goeey caramels in all sorts of delectable flavors like maple, fig and honey, and double espresso...but which is which??? Now, there's the fun! As recommended, Sandy and I chilled the caramels in the freezer for a bit to ease the slicing and dicing process one evening while visiting my folks, my sister and her boyfriend. Pro tip: For a crowd bigger than four, get another box - slicing these roughly smaller-than-an-inch cubes into representative bites smaller than a fourth is not an easy task. If you don't get quite the right bite, it's amazing how closely blood orange balsamic can taste like strawberry black pepper. But oh what fun. We sampled each, listed our wagers, and at the end, compared our answers against the master key included - the only one we all agreed on was the chili pepper. My sister, local pastry/dessert chef legend, and my mom, home culinary genius, led the scores with *only* eight right each. Sandy and I got seven correct, my dad six...and my sister's boyfriend won the participation award with only three right! Well, I filled all of his with toothpaste, actually, so he's as lucky a guesser as he is good a sport. All caramels were delicious and thankfully nothing like those awful pumpkin spice abominations. Be adventurous and snag your own box(es) of gamble caramels - definitely worth the pick up. Bottom line: Trader Joe's Taste Test of Caramels: 9 out of 10 Golden Spoons.