



## Sweets to the Sweet

### Organic Confections Diversify and Expand

By Patti Woods

#### Organic Confections

It's not just chocolate that's sweetening the pot. Last year, non-chocolate organic candy showed a 14.7 percent growth, according to Naples, FL-based ProductScan Online.

But it's the use of natural colors and flavors that make organic chocolate and confections appealing to so many people, especially parents. In an age when childhood obesity has become epidemic, parents are looking for healthier alternatives to mass-market candies and sugar-heavy treats.

"Most candies are manufactured with a lot of dyes and pesticides," said Luna Roth, president of Toronto, Ontario's Pure Fun Confections. "When you're dealing with children who are growing, that all gets absorbed into their bodies," she said. The average Pure Fun Confections product lists three to five ingredients and the new organic line includes flavors such as goji berry, ginger, raspberry, green apple and Canadian maple. "Candy is candy," she said. "It's definitely an indulgence food, but we provide a healthier choice."

#### Sweet Sales

Gone are the days when organic candies were associated with bulk bins of carob-coated nuts and coconut-rolled dates.

How can retailers boost their sales of organic confections? There are a number of strategies that can work, according to the manufacturers, and most agree that placement is key. "If you put the product on the back shelf, it's not going to work. Closer to the front end, that's where it's got to be."

While placement is important, it all depends on the amount of sales help available in the store. "You almost need to read the customer's mind and put products where they need to be," she said. Organic candy might not benefit from being stocked in the candy aisle. "When mom's buying organic fruit or milk, or when people are buying organic greens, they're in a frame of mind; they won't necessarily go down the candy aisle," she said. Therefore, it might be beneficial to stock the organic candy next to the produce or dairy.

Marketing organic candy from an environmental level can be a successful tactic. Retailers can also capitalize on the growing trend of single-origin chocolates. Traditionally, chocolate has been a blended product, but more and more manufacturers are offering single-origin bars from countries such as Peru, Costa Rica, Venezuela and Colombia.

"Bringing unblended chocolates to the market is fun, especially when you pair it with wine, beer or single-malt scotches," said Schilling, who suggested that retailers use tags similar to the ones displayed in wine stores to describe the attributes of each kind of organic chocolate.

In addition to single-origin chocolates, manufacturers are expanding their product lines by adding new sizes and flavors. This January, Pure Fun Confections will be launching its full hard candy line with pinwheels and fruit flavors, and in March, will introduce its chewy line.