

JULY 2011  
FANCY FOOD

# Chocoholic UNANONYMOUS

From dipped truffles to dark chocolate delicacies, chocolate is evolving. And, chocolate-lovers are happy to evolve with it.

By Cathryn Piccirillo

Later in May, the Sweets & Snacks Expo presented by the National Confectioners Association (NCA) came to Chicago. Attendees were treated to a variety of creative candies, which rivaled anything within Willy Wonka's magical factory. However, as always, the star of the show was chocolate. But these go beyond the traditional Snickers, Hershey's and Nestle Crunch bars of your childhood. Chocolate has undergone an intense makeover, and chocoholics are reveling in the transformation.

There were a number of easily recognizable trends apparent at the expo, most notably the infusion of chocolate and peanut butter in mixed spreads, the inclusion of healthy products (think soy nuts and berries) mixed with chocolate, chocolate-dipped jelly beans/pretzels/Creos (yes, please!), retro packaging, the reintroduction of old favorites and aerated chocolate. Chocolate combined with savory spices is making an appearance on the candy circuit as well. Regardless of your palate preference, it's clear that chocolate is an American favorite. Adding a new variety of chocolate flavors to your store can only help sales. In fact, the *World Atlas of Chocolate* reported that more than three billion pounds of chocolate is consumed each year, totaling more than \$13.1 billion in sales. Read on to uncover a few of our favorite chocolates. Your consumers will thank you!

#### Company: Xan Confections

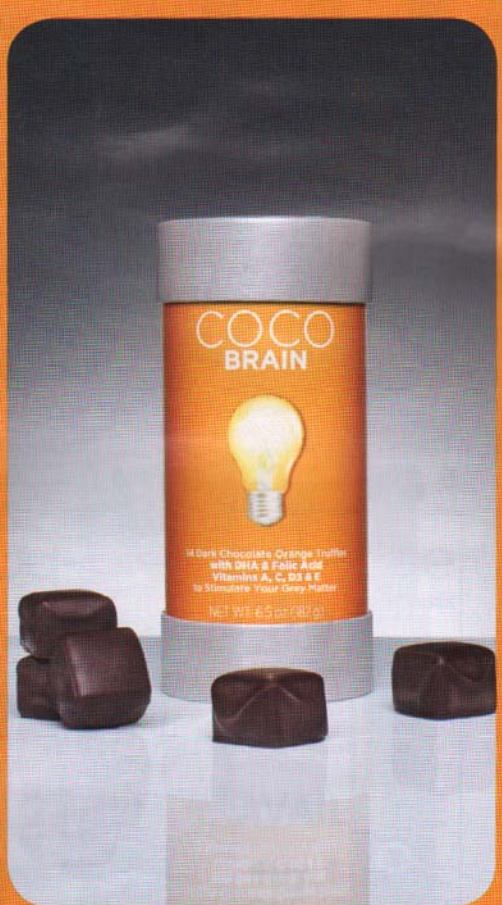
**Company history:** "As healthy food industry veterans, we saw a great need in the market to provide health-conscious chocolate-lovers with a way to indulge without sacrificing taste," says CEO Susan Johnson. "In January 2009, we launched Xan Confections after our sister company, Susan's Healthy Gourmet, expanded into a larger facility with room for growth. From our Irvine, CA facility, we create hand-crafted artisan chocolates, caramels and other treats using distinctive flavors and only the finest, all-natural ingredients."

#### What new products are you releasing?

"We just launched our new line of healthy CocoXan chocolates with benefits and have some exciting products on the horizon," says Johnson. "We will be introducing a new selection of limited edition truffles each year, with the potential for customer favorites to be offered year-round. Offerings for 2011 include a stout-flavored Black & Tan truffle, an Espresso Coffee Bean truffle containing real coffee beans and a Going Nuts truffle made with chunky peanut butter. We will also be debuting a new line of fudge in the near future."

#### How do these products relate to trends in the industry?

"In addition to great taste and high quality, consumers are now looking to get more out their chocolates. The concept of healthy chocolate is gaining traction in the industry and consumers are open to a wide variety of benefits to enhance an everyday indulgence. We recognized this growing trend early on and have made it our goal to provide our customers with new and delicious ways to enjoy chocolate while doing the body good," says Johnson. Xan Chocolate President, Kerry Johnson, adds, "We really strive to create a chocolate for everyone with products embraced by all generations of kids, men and women."



Xan's Confections (877/578-7267 or xanconfections.com) recently debuted a line of CocoXan truffles, which have a delicate balance of healthy benefits and exceptional taste. Suggested retail: \$4.99-\$46.99. Fancy Food Booth: #4513