

# Almonds & Chocolate



# The Sweetest Combination

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From smooth dark to creamy milk, there's no better partner for chocolate than the delectable crunch of a California Almond. Whether they're sliced, slivered, whole natural or blanched, almonds' irresistible appeal has people from all over the world reaching for handfuls of these tasty little tidbits. That's why it's no surprise they pack such a powerful punch when it comes to adding new dimension and flavor to the world's favorite chocolates, sweets, and treats.





# We're On the Ups

When it comes to demand, almonds and chocolate are both rising stars. It's been reported that the global retail sales of chocolate confectionery increased 15% from 5.7 million tons in 2001 to 6.6 million tons in 2006.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, global almond shipments increased from 372.4 thousand tons in 2001 to 480.8 thousand tons in 2006—a 29.1% jump.<sup>2</sup> And even with such extraordinary current demand, 99.8% of North American target audience consumers still said they wished they could find more almond product options.<sup>3</sup>

These impressive numbers prove that consumers are craving almonds and seeking them out in the foods they buy. And chocolate is at the top of the list. Almonds are the only nut to rank in the top two for number of new chocolate product introductions in every major region of the world: in 2007, almonds were the number one nut for chocolate introductions in the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East regions, and the number two in Europe, North America (US and Canada), and Latin America.<sup>4</sup>

## FYI

41% of European Union (EU) consumers report purchasing confectionery products with almonds at least once a month.<sup>5</sup>

## Fast Facts<sup>5,6</sup>

- 54% of North American consumers report almonds as the first nut that comes to mind for chocolate.
- For consumers worldwide, almonds are among the top three nuts that come to mind to pair with chocolate.

# The Finer Things

Just as consumer demand for almonds is on the rise, so is the craving for more premium chocolate pleasures. The world's appetite for higher-end confections speaks volumes for the success of the premium chocolate industry. It also means a giant growth opportunity when almonds are added to the mix.

And that's not even the best news. While almonds fit well in the world of premium chocolate due to their high-end image, they are also ideal in volume-driving, global products. North American consumers view almonds as "special to serve to family and friends," "worth more money," and "contemporary."<sup>6</sup> And at the same time, almonds' mainstream appeal is clear in that 10 of the top 15 global chocolate brands have already integrated almonds into one or more of their products.<sup>4</sup>

## Did you know?

Between 2001–2007, 17% of total new chocolate product introductions were premium, and from 2001–2006, sales of premium chocolate increased 129% to \$2 billion.<sup>1</sup>



# A Real Health Nut

Consumers everywhere are searching for tasty foods that also deliver significant health benefits. Awareness of antioxidant-rich dark chocolate has been continually on the rise making this decadent treat's popularity even stronger. Almonds contain a wealth of their own health equities, including antioxidants, heart health, and nutrient density, that strengthen the existing benefits surrounding dark chocolate.

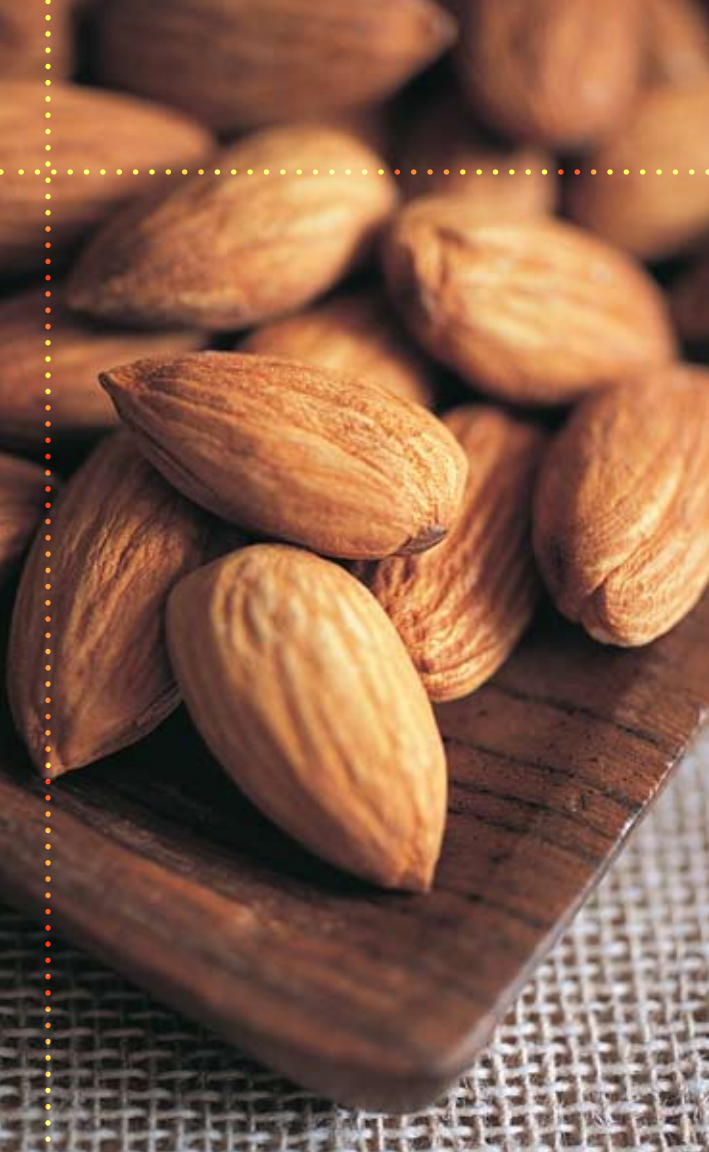
Scientifically speaking, the naturally occurring antioxidants in almonds can increase the flavonoid content of chocolate by 50% when the two are combined in confectionery delights. Experts determined the phenols, flavonoids, and phenolic acids in California Almond skins and kernels are similar to certain fruits and vegetables known for their antioxidant benefits. In addition, almonds are one of the leading food sources of alpha-tocopherol vitamin E, an antioxidant vitamin essential to the normal function of the body.<sup>8</sup>

*Scientific evidence suggests, but does not prove, that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts, such as almonds, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease.<sup>7</sup>*

## Antioxidant Dream Team: Almonds and Dark Chocolate

Almonds and dark chocolate are delicious alone. Together, however, they are the perfect pair to not only satisfy your sweet tooth but also provide an antioxidant boost. Both contain flavonoids, which are a type of antioxidant. The equation below shows you how flavonoids can add up for sweet success.

<b>Almonds</b> have 21.33mg/100g of flavonoids <sup>8</sup>	+	<b>Dark Chocolate</b> has 52.49mg/100g of flavonoids <sup>9</sup>	=	<b>Together they have</b> <b>73.82mg/100g</b> <b>of flavonoids</b>
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## Did You Know?

For over three-fourths of EU consumers (78%) and 87% of North American consumers, it is important that much of the food they eat is heart healthy. And an even greater percentage (80% in the EU and 81% in North America) rate almonds good or excellent for being heart healthy.<sup>5,6</sup>

Research also suggests that antioxidants are an important part of a diet promoting heart health. Nine clinical studies over the last thirteen years have shown that a handful of almonds as part of a diet low in saturated fat helps maintain healthy blood cholesterol levels and an overall healthy heart.

And when it comes to nutrition, gram for gram, almonds are one of the most nutrient-rich nuts around. They are naturally high in fibre, riboflavin (vitamin B2), calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, copper, and manganese, low in sodium and saturated fat, and always cholesterol free.<sup>10</sup>



# Give Them What They Want

## Tidbit

Well over half of EU consumers (58%) in the countries polled agree that a product with almonds is a better choice. And over three-fourths of EU consumers (76%) believe that a product with almonds is good for families and kids.<sup>5</sup>

## Sound Bites

Almond taste ratings continue to increase among North American consumers (on a scale of 1-10) from 7.1 in 2004 to 8.0 in 2008. That's a 13% improvement!<sup>6</sup>

With so much going for them, it's no wonder almonds are finding their match in such enticing foods as chocolate. Fundamentally, chocolate is based around fulfilling the need for sweetness and indulgence and almonds are the perfect way to add even more value to such a rich, experiential category. Think real satisfaction, new flavors and dimensions, and a delightful, crunchy texture.

Plus, as chocolate products continue to evolve and play in both the contemporary and traditional markets, almonds are moving right along with them. 65% of North American consumers agree that a product with almonds is "contemporary," while at the same time, these multi-talented nuts continue to be an integral part of many traditional food products from all over the world.<sup>6</sup>

# Success You Can Count On

Almonds are going places—there's no doubt about it. And to meet such a rapidly growing demand, the growers and handlers of California Almonds are thinking ahead and moving forward.

The California Almond industry has a strong reputation for providing a high-quality and safe product and has continued to be at the forefront of taste innovation and trends.

All this, plus consumers' love for almonds, makes them ideal to integrate into some of the sweetest, most luxurious products on the market today, and in the future. So the real question is: Why not sprinkle some of that success in your next chocolate sensation?

## Sources:

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- 9 Nutrient Data Laboratory, Food Composition Laboratory, Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. *USDA Database for the Flavonoid Content of Select Foods*. Release 2.1. January 2007. <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/Data/Flav/Flav02-1.pdf>.
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Document #5506

