



*FOR THE LOVE OF*

# CHOCOLATE!



Contract Testing Inc.





# INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, you can find chocolate in any form and mixed with the most unthinkable flavour partners – sweet and savoury, intensely spicy, fruit and nutty, and organic – are just some of the consumer trends that are currently driving innovation and sales in the multi-billion-dollar confectionery market.

The choices are limitless. We can choose to indulge in a premium variety, or opt for the more mainstream traditional bar. Either way, chocolate is more than just a food or confection, it is woven into our history and food culture – sometimes conjuring up the memories of our childhood, or consoling us like a warm blanket. Our love for chocolate runs deep, and whether we like it or not, most of us have an on-going relationship with chocolate.

This research explores six popular brands of plain milk chocolate, to see whether there are perceivable differences in their sensory profiles and whether they equally tug at the heart strings of our chocolate loving testers.



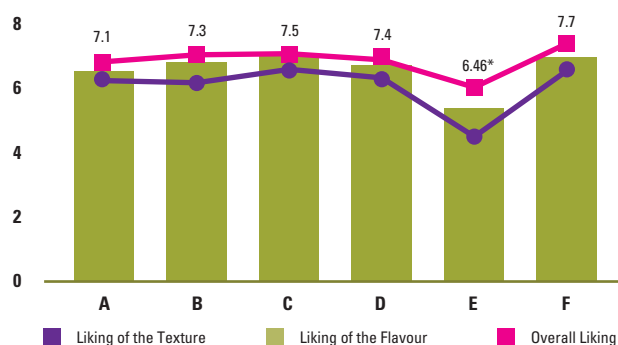
## MATERIALS AND METHODS

We asked 50 females from the Greater Toronto Area who regularly consume chocolate, to taste and evaluate six brands of plain milk chocolate. This array included two premium brands and one private label brand. Each respondent tasted one square or piece of each bar which were presented in varied order. And because most chocolate brands have embossed branding on each piece of chocolate, respondents were blindfolded to avoid easy brand identification.

## RESULTS

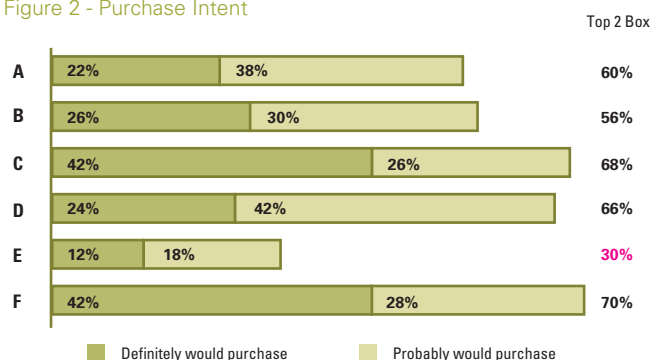
For the most part, all the chocolate samples were equally 'lovable'. Five of our six contenders had no significant differences on measures of Overall Liking, Overall Flavour, or Overall Texture (Fig 1). Products C and F were the directional 'winners' on most key measures, with both boasting very high top box purchase intent of 42% (Fig 2).

Figure 1 - Mean Liking Scores



\*Product E significantly lower than products B,C,D, & F at 95% confidence\*

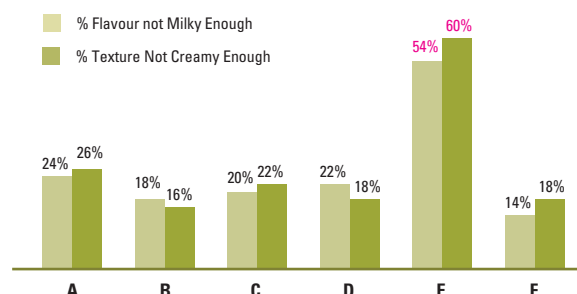
Figure 2 - Purchase Intent



Only one of the six test products, product E, failed to impress – scoring significantly lower than all the other brands on most key measures. The main point of difference was that this bar severely lacked the milky flavour and creamy texture that consumers expect in a milk chocolate (Fig 3). This was not a product with melt in mouth qualities – in fact the lack of 'melt' was the largest contributing factor to the bars dismal performance.

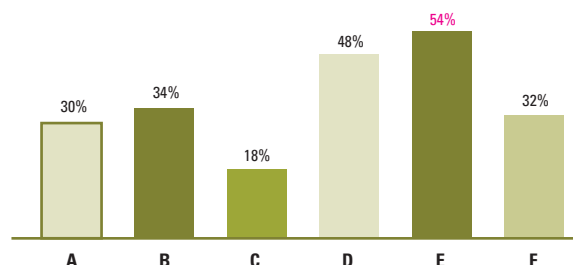
One of the most differentiating attributes of our samples was the rate of melt. The melt rate can be described as the amount of time required for solid chocolate to turn into liquid while moving it around with the tongue. While not all consumers desire the exact same rate of melt, generally we find that there is a consistent desire for fairly rapid melt. If the melt rate is too slow, the chocolate piece is typically described as waxy and artificial. A quick melt rate is associated with creaminess and milkiness, which are of course very desirable attributes of milk chocolate as well.

Figure 3 - Milky Flavour & Creamy Texture



Our weakest performing brand scored dismally low on this attribute, with over half of respondents (54%) describing the melt as too slow (Fig 4). For the brand with the top score on this attribute, 68% thought the melt was 'Just Right', while still 18% desired a faster melt.

Figure 4 - % Melt Rate - Too slow



## PREMIUM VS NON-PREMIUM CHOCOLATE

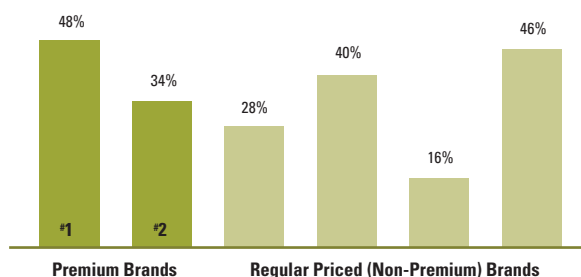
Most of our chocolate lovers (68%) were purchasers of both everyday chocolate bars and premium-priced chocolate bars, and when asked about the perceived benefits of buying premium chocolate, the most important benefit by a large margin was because it has a richer flavour. And although there is an expectation that premium chocolate is made with better quality ingredients – those ingredients do not necessarily need to be natural, 'fair trade', or organic (Fig 5). Taking a closer look at the performance of the two premium brands in our test, surprisingly neither stood apart as having significantly better quality (Fig 6). Neither was perceived to have significantly more 'premium' taste or textural profiles than three of the non-premium test samples.

**Figure 5 - Top Reasons for Purchasing Premium Priced Chocolate**  
(% chosen as Most Important or Second Most Important Reason)



One of our premium brands did achieve the top directional scores for quality and flavour. It was also most likely to be described as natural, least likely to be described as artificial – and it had the best scores for sweetness and texture of the bite. However, despite its premium credentials it was too thin and not creamy enough. Our second premium contender did not have any particular positive distinctions.

**Figure 6 - Overall Quality - % Top two box**



## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Purchase decisions in the chocolate bar section may be driven by a multitude of motivating factors such as price points, brand credentials, emotional ties with the brand, or simply spontaneous cravings. In fact, when we asked our testers why they chose one brand of chocolate over another, 96% simply attribute their brand choice to the generic catch-alls of “It’s a brand I like” or “It’s a brand I crave at the time”.

But regardless of the motivations, with every purchase decision consumers will also make a decision about whether the product delivered to their expectations...or not. And presumably, if they chose a more expensive option, these expectations will be elevated. While not everyone has the same definition of the perfect chocolate ‘mate’, the real test is whether the experience delivers as anticipated. And like any relationship, it may make the difference between a match made in heaven...or the broken hearts club.

For questions about this research, or how you can leverage consumer taste buds in your business, contact Andrew Scholes at [andrew.scholes@contracttesting.com](mailto:andrew.scholes@contracttesting.com).

*Contract Testing Inc. is an industry leader in sensory evaluation and consumer product testing. We are the only sensory evaluation and consumer product research company with corporately managed test sites in both Canada and the United States. With nearly 30 years of experience, we are innovators in testing with consumers across all major food, beverage and household and personal care categories.*



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