AISLE SEVEN TEMPTATION: COOKIES, CHOCOLATES AND ENERGY BARS, OH MY

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By Zach Schiffman

With Valentine’s Day behind us, maybe you recently grabbed some extra chocolate bars from aisle seven while waiting in line to check out. While the Coop doesn’t have the traditional impulse-purchase bait found in checkout lanes of privately owned grocery stores, there’s a level of temptation built into the cookies, chocolate and energy bars accompanying the wait for express checkout.

CHOCOLATE BARS



Shoppers peruse the chocolate offerings.

While aisle seven is not explicitly designed to encourage last-minute purchases, according to Receiving Coordinator Gillian Chi, it's been that way for the seventeen years she's worked at the Coop. Chi says the sales in that aisle are "relatively consistent from week to week," with brands like Divine Chocolate, Chocolove and Tony's Chocolonely remaining popular mainstays over the years.

SOME SHOPPERS GO FOR THE ENTICING TREATS, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE LINE IS MOVING SLOWLY.



The sweet offerings come in all sizes.

New treats can pop up in the aisle in a few different ways: from samples sent to the Coop directly from distributors, product suggestions from members, or new items researched by the coordinators themselves. “Some aisles, like the baking aisle, we’ve been selling the same items for years. But I don’t think we’re specifically more adventurous with chocolate,” Chi said. “We try to bring in new products all across the store.”

ARE YOU AN IMPULSE BUYER?



Buying by the fistful.

Waiting in the express checkout line one afternoon, patient members talked about their last-minute basket grabs.

Lots of people claimed to not buy anything extra, no matter how long the line was. “I live in a 250-square-foot apartment, and have a mini fridge, so my shopping is very intentional,” one member, named Ruthie, told me. “If I shop on impulse, it’s from the sale rack. I’m on a budget.”

That said, plenty of shoppers do fall victim to the enticing treats, especially when the line is moving particularly slowly. “I feel like it’s the last chance,” said Sarah, who often finds herself adding various nut mixes at the start of the aisle. “I’m like, okay, the line is long. And I’m not going to get back into the line. So I need to grab as many things as possible.”



Reaching for the just-right bar.

A member named Scott said “the sole purpose of this aisle is to purchase the specific chocolate that my wife asks for, which is anything 80% cocoa or more.”

Many shoppers said their last-minute cart additions are for their children. Others said their favorite random purchases include the Quadratini double-chocolate wafer cookies, the mint Newman O’s and the Chocolate Love’s Orange Peel bar.

PLENTY OF SHOPPERS SAY THEY DON’T GRAB ANYTHING EXTRA, NO MATTER HOW LONG THE LINE IS.



Chocolate choices are serious business.

When the express line wraps all the way into aisle six, as it did on the day these interviews were conducted, some members find themselves impulse-grabbing crackers or canned goods, as well. “I discovered the canned grape leaves when the line was really bad one day,” member Allie says.

The bottom line on impulse buying? “The same happens over in the other aisle,” member Kate said of the regular checkout lane. “It’s just less exciting. It’s soap over there.”