

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CANDY TECHNOLOGISTS

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

- 1:00 PM **Optional Candy Demonstration**
(must select demo option when registering)
- 4:30 PM **First-timers and Under-30 Reception**
- 5:30 PM **Opening Reception** (until 8:00 PM)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2026

- 8:30 AM — **Presentations**
- 4:30 PM
- 4:30 PM **Supplier Exhibits & Reception** (until 6:30 PM)
- 6:45 PM **Stroud Jordan Award Banquet**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

- 8:30 AM — **Presentations and Round Table Discussions**
- 4:30 PM
- 4:30 PM **Iron Confectioner Competition**
- 6:15 PM **Dinner**

PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

Chew on This: A Beginner's Guide to Chewing Gum John Stinson, Mars Snacking/Wrigley

Chewing gum is a complex, two-phase confection designed for sustained mastication, consisting of water-insoluble gum base and a water-soluble portion. This talk reviews the essential components—elastomers, resins, softeners, sweeteners, and flavorings—that determine the product's texture, elasticity, and flavor release. The manufacturing process focuses on the fusion method, which involves melting the base, high-shear mixing, extrusion, rolling, and in some cases, coating. Furthermore, the roles of polyols and anti-tack agents are highlighted in addressing challenges related to stickiness and product stability.

People Leadership: A Path to a Thriving Community Melissa Tisoncik, Blommer Chocolate

What does it look like for professionals and teams to thrive in their workplace? How can a people manager make a difference in setting their team up for success? Why does it matter to understand what motivates an individual? Learn the principles of what it truly means to be a people leader and the skills necessary to harness talent, empower people, and elevate others to meet their highest potential.

Navigating Third-Party Product Claim Certifications in Chocolate and Confectionery

Meredith Koss, Clasen Quality Chocolate

The chocolate and confectionery industry operates in an environment shaped by numerous third-party product claim certifications, many of which play an increasingly important role in purchasing decisions as consumers look for recognizable certification badges on packaging. This presentation provides a practical overview of commonly used certifications and will address key formulation, labeling, and operational considerations, highlighting cross-functional impacts to quality, regulatory, R&D, sourcing, and operations teams when pursuing and maintaining multiple third-party certifications.

Mapping Mouthfeel: A Consumer-Based Approach to Gummy Confection Design

Pooja Nersekar & Ryan Dillman, Tate & Lyle

Gummy confection is having a moment. To remain competitive in this dynamic landscape, it is essential to understand the sensory attributes that shape consumer preferences—particularly mouthfeel—which plays a pivotal role in product acceptance. Leveraging our Sensation™ research methodology, we conducted a targeted analysis of the gummy confection market to identify key mouthfeel characteristics that resonate with consumers. Our findings offer actionable insights for product developers seeking to align texture profiles with market demands and future trends.

Snacks that Broke the Internet: How content and consumer curiosity shape what we snack on

Erin O'Donnell, ADM

Candy trends move at the speed of the feed. Social platforms like TikTok help us discover niche food and drink trends, making them global hits overnight. Videos attract viewers with the visceral crunch of new and exciting textures, while tasting videos demonstrate how fusion flavors and global tastes leave consumers hungry for differentiated snacks. With a combination of proprietary consumer insights, as well as input from global marketing, technical, and culinary colleagues, we'll dive into the role social media is playing in confection trends, and even try some of them ourselves!

Why Sugar Free Chocolates and Confections Continue to Surge: A Convergence of Consumer Forces Unlike Anything Before Seen

Gabe Eaton, Russell Stover Chocolates

Since the advent of sugar free confections, the global market for these commodities has experienced robust sustained growth. The convergence of multiple consumer forces is what has led to this remarkable growth. These drivers represent a noted market shift that helps position sugar free chocolate and confections as one of the most dynamic segments in the industry today with many opportunities for continual growth.

Fortification of gummies and confectionary products: Utilization and benefits of functionally optimized nutrient and premix technology

Diana Bickmore, Glanbia

Fortification of food and supplement products, including gummies and candies, often presents significant complexity for manufacturers. While some nutrients are inherently easy to work with, many nutrients pose distinct challenges. This discussion will explore common challenges associated with nutrient fortification of gummies and candies as well as benefits conferred by utilizing functionally optimized nutrient technology in these formats. We will evaluate how inclusion of premix blends containing functionally optimized nutrient technology can streamline finished good manufacturing.

Ball Mill Versus Five-Roll Refining in Chocolate Manufacturing: Process Fundamentals, Product Characteristics, and Operational Considerations

Giulia Nervo, Tecno 3

Particle size reduction is a critical step in chocolate manufacturing, directly influencing texture, rheology, flavor development, and overall product quality. While traditional five-roll refining remains the dominant technology for high-capacity chocolate production, ball mill refining has gained acceptance as an alternative approach offering process simplification and enhanced flexibility. This presentation examines the fundamental operating principles of both technologies and compares their impact on particle size distribution, flavor development, energy consumption, production throughput, and finished product characteristics.

Melting and Browning of Gelatin- and Plant-Based Marshmallows

Meredie Cohen, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Gelatin is a difficult ingredient to mimic in confections due to its unique thermal properties. In this talk, these thermal properties will be explored through the results of a study on melting and browning of gelatin- and plant-based marshmallows. Differences in the outcomes of toasting various commercial marshmallow products will be presented. Browning reaction science and evaluation protocols will also be discussed.

A Technical Introduction into Confectionary Flexible Packaging Films and the Evolution into Recycle Ready Solutions

Jeff Morris, Amcor
This presentation will focus on a high-level overview of what have historically been the workhorse flexible packaging film solutions in the confectionary market. We'll look at why different film types are chosen and what properties they bring to a multi-laminate structure. We'll then look at how these film structures are evolving as we move into a market more focused on sustainable, recycle-ready solutions and the mono-material technology solutions that help us fulfill the package format requirements and protect your products inside.

Mold Design Panel

Paul Bartley, WRH Industries, Ltd.
Tom Bailey, PJ Bold

Listen to industry experts discuss the process of mold design, how to make the best choices for your product, and considerations in design choices.

Building Multitexture Confections

Matt Bernsdorf, Parker Products
To Be Announced

ROUND TABLE TOPICS

PROTEIN IN CONFECTIONS
REPLACING CHOCOLATE WITH COMPOUND
CONFECTIONS PACKAGING
MANAGING YOUR CO-MAN
NETWORKING
AND MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Registration Fees:	Aug. 21 or before	After Aug. 21
Registration Fee (<i>non-member</i>)	\$690	\$740
National Chapter Member (<i>reduced fee</i>)	\$580	\$630
Students (accredited, post secondary)	\$200	\$250
Supplier Tables	\$315	\$415
Optional Tour /Demo	\$50	\$75

Optional Event:

An optional candy demo will take place on Monday afternoon, beginning at 1:00 P.M. An extra fee is required.

Hotel:

Reservations must be made directly with the Hyatt Lodge —
2815 Jorie Blvd., Oak Brook, IL 60523
www.hyatt.com/events/en-US/group-booking/CHILO/G-09AA
Phone: +1 (630) 568 1234
Rates: \$175 per night (single or double). Ask for AACT group rate.

Grants Available:

The Allured Fund for Confectionery Education provides grants to those who would like to attend but are unable due to financial hardships. Grants are open to any individual residing in the United States. For information on applying for the grants or for contributing to the fund: www.gomc.com/AlluredFund

Seminar registration is available at: www.aactcandy.org

American Association of Candy Technologists

Email: aactinfo@gomc.com • Web: www.aactcandy.org



2026 National Technical Seminar Agenda

Monday, September 28
through
Wednesday, September 30

The Hyatt Lodge
Oak Brook, Illinois, USA