

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CANDY TECHNOLOGISTS

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

- 1:00 PM **Candy Demonstration** (pre-registration required)
- 4:30 PM **Speed Networking**
- 5:30 PM **Opening Reception** (until 8:00 pm)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2026

MORNING SESSION

- 8:30 AM **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
- 8:35 AM **Snacks that Broke the Internet: How Content & 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 will dive into the role social media is playing in confection trends, and even try some of them ourselves.

- 9:20 AM **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.

- 10:05 AM **Break**
- 10:20 AM **NCA Regulatory Update**
Julie Moss, *NCA*

This annual update from the National Confectioners Association will address regulatory news, changes and outlook across the confectionery industry.

Tuesday, September 29 (continued)

- 11:20 AM **A Technical Introduction into Confectionery 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 confectionery market. We will look at why different film types are chosen and what properties they bring to a multi-laminate structure. We will 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 products inside.

- 12:05 PM **Lunch**

AFTERNOON SESSION

- 12:50 PM **Opening Remarks**
- 1:00 PM **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.

- 1:45 PM **Fortification of Gummies and Confectionery 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.

Tuesday, September 29 (continued)

- 2:30 PM **Break**
- 2:45 PM **Water Basics in Confections**
Richard Hartel, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*
- Despite accounting for only a small fraction of most sugar confections, water influences everything from cooking temperatures and texture development to microbial stability and shelf life. In this presentation, we will explore the fundamental science of water in confectionery systems, including water activity and boiling point elevation, and more. These topics are essential to understanding confectionery science, yet they are often misunderstood or misused.
- 3:30 PM **Break**
- 4:30 PM **Supplier Exhibits & Reception** (until 6:30 pm)
- 6:45 PM **Stroud Jordan Award Banquet**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

MORNING SESSION

- 8:30 AM **Opening Remarks**
- 8:35 AM **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.

- 9:20 AM **Melting and Browning of Gelatin- and Plant-based Marshmallows**
Meredithe 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.

- 10:05 AM **Break**

Wednesday, September 30 (continued)

10:20 AM **Round Table Session 1**

11:05 AM **Round Table Session 2**

11:35 AM **Round Table Session 3**

Round Table Topics (all topics available each session):

- NATURAL COLORS IN CONFECTIONS
- PROTEIN IN CONFECTIONS
- CANNABIS - HOW IT'S EVOLVING
- REPLACING CHOCOLATE WITH COMPOUND
- AI DISCUSSION
- PROCESS AND PACKAGING AUTOMATION
- MANAGING YOUR CO-MAN
- BAR FORMING CHALLENGES
- COMMERCIALIZATION CHALLENGES
- NETWORKING

Noon **Lunch**

AFTERNOON SESSION

1:00 PM **Mould Design Panel**
Paul Bartley, *WRH Industries, Ltd.*
Tom Bailey, *PJ Bold*

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

1:45 PM **Navigating Third-Party Product Claim Certifications in Chocolate and Confectioner**
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.

2:30 PM **Break**

Wednesday, September 30 (continued)

2:45 PM **Why Sugarfree Chocolates and Confections Continue to Surge: A Convergence of Consumer Forces Unlike Anything Before Seen**
Gabe Eaton, *Russell Stover Chocolates*

Since the advent of sugarfree 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 sugarfree chocolate and confections as one of the most dynamic segments in the industry today with many opportunities for continual growth.

3:30 PM **Building Multi-Texture Confections: Designing Inclusions and Toppings for Compound and Confectionery Applications**
Matt Bernsdorf, *Parker Products*

Explore the role inclusions, toppings, and compound coatings play in building multi texture confectionery experiences and the challenges that come with bringing these products to life. Attendees will learn how ingredient selection, moisture management, particle size, and processing conditions impact texture retention, product stability, and overall sensory performance throughout manufacturing and shelf life. The session will also share practical considerations for designing multi-texture systems that balance indulgence, functionality, and manufacturability while delivering a consistent consumer experience across a variety of confectionery applications.

4:30 PM **Iron Confectioner Competition**

6:15 PM **Dinner**



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2026 National Technical Seminar Agenda

Monday, September 28
through
Wednesday, September 30

The Hyatt Lodge
Oak Brook, Illinois, USA