



Exotic Snack Guys

Story and Photos by Danny Fairchild

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion..." —Rutger Hauer as "Roy Batty," *Bladerunner*, 1982

"So damn what, skinjob! I've tasted a Kesar-Pista-flavored Snickers bar. And until you do THAT, you ain't seen... oh, NOW you die?!" —Fanny Fairchild as "Danny Fairchild," *365ink*, whatever issue this is

So... like most people of my age, I have a complicated relationship with the film *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. It's mostly positive which, I know, could go either way depending on the person. But let's not get into all that and just look at the positive, fun, fantastical aspects

of the film. Exotic Snack Guys (Dot Com) takes an ordinary retail space in Dubuque's own Kennedy Mall and, without the use of (real) magic, somehow captures a "world of pure imagination" with bright, friendly lighting; full-but-not-overly-busy displays, cute candy-pink shopping bags; and all the snacks from around the world you've been missing or been missing out on. It's just a delight to pop in there and see all the different candies and chips and sodas and cookies and... and... and... and anyway.

I'm a man with a powerful sweet tooth. Too powerful. Like... my sweet tooth is like a really crappy superpower. I crave sweets more than any living being. My arch-nemesis is pre-diabetes. So, I had some things picked out and on the sales counter before I could even ask for a recommendation. I got a lot of stuff, and all of it deserves to be commented on. So let's get started.

Let's start with the product that was recommended to me. Kebab-flavored Tiger brand potato chips. This savory little delight hails from Egypt and is one of Exotic Snack Guys' best sellers. I believe it. I snagged the last bag on the shelf. As far as texture of this chip: Start with a Ruffle or similar. The potato chips with ridges. Now, make the ridges a little tighter. Like... if the ridges were a wavelength, Tiger would be

a higher wavelength. Make sense? It makes it a little more brittle, but still dippable. And you're going to want to dip these, friends. Any chip dip will do. Because these chips manage to pull off the seared meat flavor of a kebab, if not a friggin' beef steak. It's amazing. It's (the flavor of) a meat-and-potatoes meal all in one chip. How friggin' Wonkaesque is that? Now imagine dipping that in French onion dip, or ranch dip, or whatever dip. The internet purports this to be a spicy-flavored chip. I didn't get much of that, so don't be afraid.

A lot of the things I bought on my way to spending way too much money on snacks were things I'd only ever heard about. Like Milkybar. This bar of white chocolate has been around since the 1930s but is only sold as an import here in the U.S., even though it's sold worldwide. And I get it. We look at white chocolate and see almond bark. The snobbiest of us look at white chocolate and say something to the effect of "Well actually, white chocolate isn't really chocolate." And to paraphrase The Dude, you're not wrong, you're just an expletive deleted. I won't yuck your yum if you like white chocolate, but with white chocolate, I generally just feel cheated. I bought the Milkybar because I thought Annie would like it. She likes

white chocolate in her espresso drinks, so I thought that meant she liked white chocolate. I was adorably wrong about that. That said, I've tried plenty of white chocolate. It gets around in the form of gifts. As far as bars comprised of nothing but white chocolate go, this is probably the best example. It's good. Almond bark, schmalmond bark. Not my thing, but if you like white chocolate, I can't imagine you not liking this.

Kit Kat bars are just as bad, if not worse than Oreo cookies in terms of the number of largely unnecessary different flavors. By the way, Exotic Snack Guys has some of the weirder Oreos, too, though I didn't get around to them. Most of the weird Kit Kats are only available as imports in the U.S. so thank goodness for Exotic Snack Guys. I almost flippantly picked up a Kit Kat Chunky Drumstick. "Drumstick" as in a Drumstick brand ice cream cone. It was just a, "Meh... I need to try at least one unorthodox Kit Kat, this seems fine." I didn't understand the obvious implications of such a confection. Don't see it? Well let me enlighten you by asking you this question: What is the best part of a Drumstick? Oh ho! Now you get it, don't you? The best part of a Drumstick is the very end tip of the cone where the inner chocolate coating has collected along with



KENNEDY MALL

whatever ice cream has melted. So... with the wafer/waffle texture of a Kit Kat... with the chocolate coating of a Kit Kat and/or Drumstick... plus the further Drumstick influence... this Kit Kat is the very best last bite of a Drumstick in full candy bar form. HOW is this just a Canada thing?!

Speaking of Canada, it turned out that many of the things I got came from our friends (for now) to the north. I'm sure you've heard of Coffee Crisp. While not generally available in the U.S., Coffee Crisps are HUGE in Canada. Like... "Official NHL Sponsor" huge. And Kit Kats are actually a pretty good segue into Coffee Crisps because again, you're getting a classic chocolate-covered wafer bar. But as the name suggests, you're getting a nice lovely coffee flavor. And you get it in the form as a delightfully foamy soft layers amongst the wafers. If you like Kit Kats even a little bit, you'll love Coffee Crisps.

Still touring Canada's snack food landscape (to the point where I feel foolish for not getting my hands on some all-dressed chips), let's talk Tim Tam. How to describe Tim Tam cookies? Hmm. Take a Double-Stuffed Oreo or similar. Make it rectangular. Make the cookie layers thicker. Now make the cream layer fluffier. Now dip that mofo in chocolate. Feel me? Because

it's chocolate covered, it doesn't have the milkability of an Oreo, but it tries. And BECAUSE it's chocolate flavored AND the cookie isn't as dense as an Oreo, folks have been known to sip coffee, hot toddies or hot chocolate through a Tim Tam. I just found that out, and now all the Tim Tams are gone, and I'm pissed. Oh, well. Guess I have to go back to Exotic Snack Guys. I got regular (milk chocolate) Tim Tam cookies, but I also got the dark mint variety and... ooooooh, my friends. Here in the U.S. we, of course, have Thin Mints and similar. Dark Mint Tim Tam cookies are like Thin Mints... but thick. Thicc Mints. Again with the two thick but not-so-dense cookie layers. Again with the light cream filling. But that strong dark mint flavor we indulge heavily in during fundraising season.

One thing I picked up out of pure whimsy is the Twix Secret Centre Biscuits. Now... this is a product of the U.K., so let's just go ahead and translate "biscuit" into "cookie." If you look on the package of a Twix candy bar you can purchase at literally any store in the United States, you'll see them described as "cookie bars." So Twix Secret Centre Biscuits are Twix cookie bars... that are in cookie, not bar form. These are Twix bars still in the larva stage. I don't know if a middleman is being cut out

or added in the production of this treat, but it was funny enough for me to buy.

Oh, crap. I teased you with the Kesar Pista Snickers bar and almost left you hanging. Now... I had no idea what kesar pista is before purchasing this candy bar. I just saw a Snickers that had pistachios in it and figured it HAD to be good. Oh ho! Got your attention now, don't I? This Snickers bar is imported from India. Kesar pista, if you're as ignorant as me, is a combination of saffron and pistachio that is a common flavor in desserts including, but not limited to, Snickers bars. You may recognize saffron and pistachio as two expensive ingredients. Screw giving me my weight in gold. Give me my weight in saffron ANY day. As such, you're not getting REAL saffron, and the pistachios are cut with almonds, but nonetheless, it's gotten me excited about the kesar-pistabilities. Flavorwise? Umm... kiiiiinda like eggnog. Sorta. If you don't like eggnog, you still might like this.

My legendary sweet tooth is excited about all the possibilities of Exotic Snack Guys. It's like getting a subscription snacks-of-the-world bundle that you get to pick and not have to wait for. That said, Exotic Snack Guys (Dot Com) has subscription services. Have a blast! ■

Exotic Snack Guys

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