

Dubai Chocolate craze reaches fever pitch

By Natasha Spencer-Jolliffe

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Dubai Chocolate is the stand-out chocolate trend of 2024/25. (Image: Getty/ tolgart)

Knafteh-flavoured bars

Social media's role in the ongoing rise of Dubai Chocolate is undoubtable. So much so, that Dubai Chocolate is starting to experience the starry sales heights that mimic the sold-out status energy drink Prime enjoyed in 2023.

However, unlike Prime, created by internet personalities Logan Paul and Olajide "KSI" Olatunji, Dubai Chocolate is giving numerous confectionery manufacturers the opportunity to have a bite of the pistachio and Knafteh-flavoured sector.

Dubai Chocolate is famous for its sweet chocolate, creamy pistachio, crispy texture, and a hint of aromatic Eastern spices in one convenient ingredient. Pistachio is a core ingredient, included in either a finely ground texture or as a paste. Kataifi pastry, commonly used in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean desserts, is also present and is the main ingredient in Knafteh, a Middle Eastern dessert.

The new chocolate bar is just as popular with manufacturers as it is with consumers, as its ingredients enable producers to avoid the spiralling costs of cocoa-based chocolate and pistachios.

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A social media first

that this trend would not exist without social media, specifically TIKTOK .

The original creators of Dubai Chocolate, confectioner Fix Desserts, had a limited marketing budget. So, they used influencers and social media to promote their hybrid chocolate, which combines dessert and confectionery.

“Like most successful food social media trends, what Dubai Chocolate has is colour,” says Bagshaw.

Social media is all about visuals. Past social media food trends, such as the popularity of Waitrose’s Pistachio Easter Egg, revolve around vibrant shades. The bright colour makes every picture look more appealing. “The same goes for Dubai Chocolate; the bright green pistachio filling bursting out of the chocolate makes fantastic content on Instagram and TikTok,” adds Bagshaw.

Dubai Chocolate is proving so popular, it's selling out in supermarkets. (Image: I.T.S.)

Creating mystery and intrigue

Dubai Chocolate has been surrounded by mystery and interest, with consumers curious about this green and indulgent chocolate treat. "This has really helped to fuel the fire," says Bagshaw.

TikTok was quickly loaded with videos of influencers tasting Dubai Chocolate and giving their opinions. The huge social media buzz gives mainstream brands and retailers confidence in the product's popularity to fully back their launches.

Dubai is also seen as a cool destination favoured by celebrities and influencers among Gen Z consumers, in particular. "This has helped to position the chocolate as a must-try among this demographic," Bagshaw adds. In 2024, for the third year in a row, Dubai won the annual Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Awards. Euromonitor International also ranked Dubai as the world's number one city destination in the 2023 Top 100 city destinations index.

Entering the better-for-you space?

The latest newbie to the craze is specialist flavour house I.T.S, which has launched its new Dubai Chocolate flavour bar. Adding to the top TikTok trend, I.T.S. has created a new natural flavour that manufacturers can add to various applications to support confectioners in leveraging its appeal.

I.T.S.' latest creation aims to retain its flavour and provide confectionery manufacturers with a natural, allergen-free product option. The confectionery creation is seeing other sectors following suit, with manufacturers pursuing the

Natural flavours recreate flavour notes of the original product and can be considered an asset to manufacturers' NPD. "The new Dubai Chocolate natural flavour has been developed, and we can see many brand extensions where confectionery flavours are used in other applications such as desserts," says Bagshaw.

With escalating cocoa prices ongoing, cost and sourcing concerns continue around chocolate and extend to pistachios. "Currently, cocoa prices are all over the place, and this is an issue that will have to be managed across all cocoa-based products," says Bagshaw.

Using a natural chocolate flavour for all or part of a recipe means that confectionery manufacturers can better manage the finished product price point of their cocoa and chocolate products. "As far as ingredients such as pistachios are concerned, supply changes from day to day," adds Bagshaw.

Global conflicts and tariffs are changing daily, so what is value for money today might be expensive tomorrow. "Brands must manage this closely and can use alternatives such as natural flavours as required," says Bagshaw.



Dubai Chocolate has a unique pistachio and Knafeh-filling. (tolgart/Image: Getty/tolgart)

Spreading throughout confectioners' form factor plans

After witnessing its social media boom, retailers are now responding by bringing their versions of the popular chocolate bar to market.

Due to its snap-it-up popularity, intensified by its presence on TikTok, stockists are sold out of certain brands. Farhi and Lidl's Dubai Chocolate varieties are currently sold out, with Lidl previously confirming it was selling 72 bars of the chocolate bar per minute. One local Lidl store in the UK had a notice on its front door on April 3rd, stating it's sold out of its Dubai Chocolate products.

Swiss chocolatier Lindt has developed its Dubai Style Chocolate. Due to its overwhelming popularity, premium British supermarket Waitrose has had to impose a two-bar limit on shoppers looking to buy Lindt's variety. Rifai Confectionery has also created its Dubai Chocolate variety, combining pistachio's sweet and nutty flavour with its crispy pastry texture.

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