Just Desserts

Virtuous confections can be hard to stomach. Leaden banana bread, spirulina fudge balls, 'Cho-kale-let' cake. So we asked five candy aficionados to recommend eco-treats that'll sate your sweet tooth and go down easy.

"One of my favorite vegan candies is the Blueberry Licorice from PANDA (www.pandaficcion.com). From first smell to last bite, you can tell that these little chews are made from real blueberry puree. The taste reminds me of a perfectly balanced jam—tart but not too sweet. And they have the familiar chewy texture of licorice without being tough." About 54 for 7 ounces

SUE GILLBLAIR, formerly the executive editor of Professional Candy Buyer magazine, is now the spokesperson for Candy.com, an online store that sells more than 5,000 kinds of candy from its Massachusetts headquarters.

"I've been hooked. The flavor is full-bodied but not make-you-wince overpowering. What I like most is that they're neither chalky nor Tic Tac-smooth—the texture lies somewhere between. They're certified organic, gluten-free, nut-free, and have earned the Non-GMO Project verification seal." About 52 for 1.14 ounces

SAM GOLD is the founder of Yumvelope (yumvelope.com), an Illinois-based service that mails subscribers a monthly selection of natural desserts, snacks, and drinks.

"Surf Sweets (surfsvweets.com) makes organic Gummy Worms. My go-to treat when I need a sweet fix. For those of us used to bland gummies, these make a particularly satisfying guilty pleasure. Surf Sweets supports the Ocean Project (theoceanproject.org), sponsors Climate Cycle (climaterecycle.org), and partners with Green Halloween (greenhalloween.org)." About $2 for 2.75 ounces

REBECCA ZOROWITZ co-owns, with her mother, Osh La La Candy (oolahcandy.com), a candy-repackaging company in New York City known especially for its treat-filled "cupcakes."

"Dagoba (dagobachocolate.com) makes succulent chocolate bars that have surprising bursts of flavor and depth. Flavors include exotic options like cherry, lavender blueberry, and lemon ginger. Its products are made from organic, sustainably grown ingredients and come in wrappers made from 50 percent recycled materials. Dagoba donates part of its profits to tree-planting projects in Costa Rica." About $3 for 1.14 ounces

ANNE SHAFFER, a classically trained pastry chef in Chicago, started Sulpcice Chocolat (sulpicerchocolat.com) in 2007. Last year, her company was the official chocolateier of the Grammy's; attendees got Shaffer's hand-painted bars in their gift bags.

"As the co-founder of Chocolatiquest (chocolatiquest.com), Los Angeles-based ED ENGORGON has traveled to more than 130 countries in search of the world's best artisan sweets. Engoron, who studied at Le Cordon Bleu, is also a chef, restaurateur, cookbook author, and food consultant.

"The colorful Organic Sunny Fruit Slices from solar-powered SUNRIDGE FARMS (sunridgefarms.com) are sold in bulk at many markets and are jelly candies with a great mix of fruit flavors—cherry, grapefruit, lemon, orange, grape, and strawberry. They're made with organic, all-natural evaporated cane juice, tapioca syrup, and grape juice concentrate."

About 52 for 1.14 ounces

ANNIE SHAFER, an actor, activist, and entrepreneur

"Just test the chemicals to make sure they're safe before exposing our children to them."

—Jessica Alba

BY AVITAL ANDREWS

Trendsetter

You might have seen Jessica Alba kill a bad guy with a stiletto heel in the gory action flick Machete. You might also have spotted her on the cover of Maxim (twice). But fewer people probably caught her on C-SPAN lecturing Congress about the urgency of passing laws to regulate the chemicals in the products we buy. A staunch environmental advocate, the 51-year-old star recently launched the Honest Company (honest.com), which makes nontoxic, ecofriendly baby gear.

Q: Why did you go to D.C. to lobby for the Safe Chemicals Act last year?

A: Basically, it's legislation that hasn't been reformed in more than 30 years. It's about regulating chemicals in everyday products. There are more than 80,000 chemicals in the U.S. marketplace right now—only 5 have been banned. In Europe, 1180 are banned because they're not safe for humans. When they're creating and selling new chemicals, companies aren't thinking about how they affect people's health—it's about their bottom line.

Q: You had asthma as a kid, right? Does that make you worry more about air pollution?

A: I grew up with asthma and allergies, among other health issues. That forced me from a very early age to look at my environment in a different way. I don't take things for granted. I don't automatically trust the conglomerates. I question processes, I question ingredients, I look for a better way. I always try to find a more natural and holistic approach before just jumping on a Band-Aid. Better to prevent something from happening in the first place.

Q: We assume that you’re the only woman who’s topped Maxim’s "Hot 100" list and also testified before Congress about environmental legislation. How do you walk that balance?

A: [Laughs] I don't know. I don't even really think about it in those terms. The marketing I've done to promote TV and films has been wonderful because it's given me a platform to be able to speak about things that are important to me...

—Interview by Olli Cotel

ON THE WEB For a longer version of this interview, go to sierrachub.org/greenlife.