

Sweet somethings from far, far away

Sample the exotic, sugar-infused tidbits of Idaho — and beyond.

By AVITAL BINSHTOCK
Special to *The Times*

FREQUENT travelers know that one of the simple pleasures of being in a new place is standing in a market entirely dumbfounded by all the totally unexpected treats. ¶ Many of the confections that used to be foreign to Americans now have become standard fare here. Germany, for example, gave us the gummi bear, and England bestowed upon us the Cadbury Creme Egg. ¶ This fact got us wondering what other sugar-filled goodies are here and abroad, just awaiting our discovery. Some of our favorites.

BOTAN RICE CANDY

Where it's from: Japan

Why it's worth trying: Each piece of candy in the box is individually wrapped — but you're supposed to eat the translucent "paper," which is made of rice and dissolves in your mouth. Also inside every box: a sticker or temporary tattoo.

What it's made of: Sugar, sweet rice, water, food coloring and lemon and orange flavorings.

Where to get it: Throughout Japan and in most Asian grocery stores for about \$1 per box.

KINDER SURPRISE

(also called *Kinder Egg*)

Where it's from: It originated in Italy but is prevalent in Germany, England and elsewhere in Western Europe.

Why it's worth trying: It's a thin, hollow "eggshell" with milk chocolate on the outside and white chocolate on the inside. The hollow space holds a small plastic capsule, inside which is an assembly-required novelty toy such as a mini-gorilla or a Viking figurine.

What it's made of: Cocoa solids and milk solids. The toys are usually plastic.

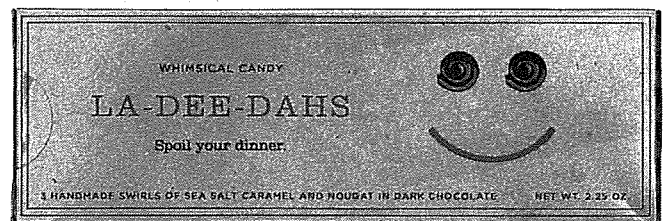
Where to get it: Throughout Europe, or at www.malincho.com (12 for about \$16 plus shipping); buy in bulk and they come in an egg carton.



IDAHO SPUD BAR

Where it's from: Boise, Idaho

Why it's worth trying: This candy bar is semi-potato-shaped.



LA-DEE-DAHS

Where it's from: Chicago

Why it's worth trying: Handmade by a company called Whimsical Candy, owned by pastry chef Chris Kadow-Dougherty, these spiraling chewies aren't overly sweet, come in adorable packaging and reflect Chicago's happy-go-lucky orientation.

What it's made of: Sea-salt caramel, nougat and fair-trade dark chocolate.

Where to get it: At many Chicago retailers and www.pastoralartisan.com; \$6 per three-piece box, plus shipping.

GRAFFITI BAR

Where it's from: New York City

Why it's worth trying: A company called Alison Nelson's Chocolate Bar enlisted the help of 10 old-school graffiti artists to design the "rappings" for her candy bars, giving them the look of New York City street art. Some of the profits go toward the All Stars Project, a performing-arts organization for underprivileged youth. And the chocolate's delicious.

What it's made of: Chocolate, in flavors such as almond, caramel, cookies-n-cream, s'mores, strawberry, toffee crunch, banana and rum.

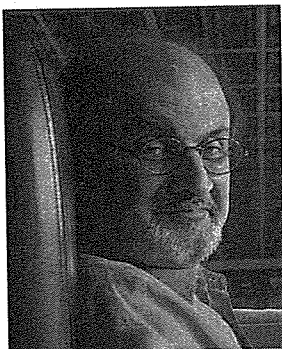
Where to get it: At Chocolate Bar locations in N.Y. and New Jersey or at www.chocolatebar NYC.com. A 2.25-ounce bar goes for \$4; for \$40, you can get a limited-edition box that contains 10 bars and an authentic graffiti stencil; shipping additional.

NEED TO KNOW

NEWS . STYLE . TIPS . TRENDS

My dinner with Salman

Travelers with deep pockets and deeper thoughts, take note: Las Ventanas al Paraíso, a Rosewood resort in Los Cabos, Mexico, offers a chance to break bread and rub shoulders with acclaimed author Salman Rushdie in a reception and two dinners Sept. 4 to 7. Part of the resort's "Hot Type Author Series," the event allows guests to hobnob with Rushdie and discuss his latest novel, "The Enchantress of Florence." Rushdie, born in India but now a British citizen, spent nearly a decade underground after his 1988 novel, "The Satanic Verses," led to death threats from Muslims and a *fatwa* by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (it was later lifted). Room rates at the resort begin at \$500 a night, and all guests are welcome to the Rushdie reception. The dinners cost \$250 per person. Info: (310) 824-7781.



JENNIFER S. ALTMAN
For The Times

— CHRIS ERSKINE

Hawaii short-hop

The Hawaii Superferry, which shuttles between Oahu (Honolulu) and Maui (Kahului), is hitting its stride after returning to service in April. In July, it ran about half full, averaging 390 passengers and 99 vehicles per trip. But how does this compare with flying? Time: No contest. The Oahu-Maui flight takes 35 minutes, and the ferry takes three hours. Cost: Pretty close. For a Sept. 18-to-23 round trip, including taxes and fees, the Superferry costs \$128.99 per person. The lowest airfares (also including taxes and fees), when I recently checked on Kayak.com, started at \$146.50 on Mesa Air Group's go! airline and \$140 on Hawaiian Airlines. For Nov. 6-to-11 round trips, the ferry penciled out to \$151.89, versus the lowest airfare, \$141.50, for go! Caveats: Superferry fares bounce up and down, depending on whether you go midweek or during the weekend and whether an often-hefty fuel surcharge is applied. Info: (877) 443-3779, www.hawaiisuperferry.com

— JANE ENGLE



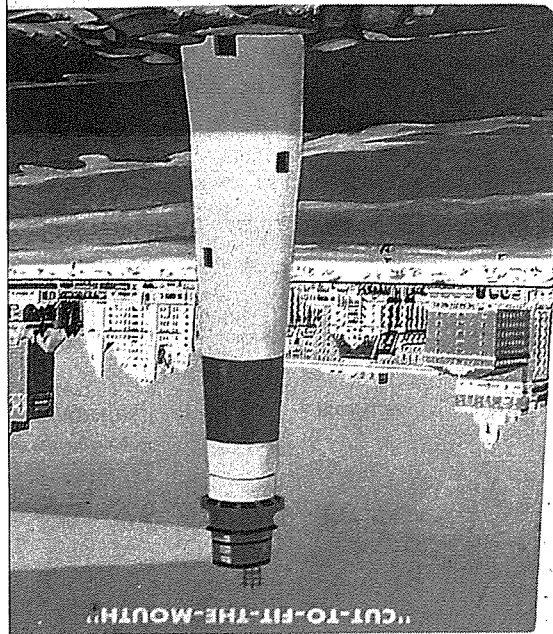
though it tastes nothing like a potato, nor do its ingredi-
include potato. Instead, this concoction, made by the
family-run Idaho Candy Co., is a tribute to the state's fa-
tuber rather than a faithful representation.
What it's made of: A marshmallow center with a soft cho-
coating, all covered in shredded coconut.
Where to get it: Throughout the Northwest or from www.spud.com; \$18 for a 24-bar box, plus shipping. (At the sa-
site, you can also get the peanutty-chocolate-marshmal-
Old Faithful bar, named after the Yellowstone geyser.)

SALMIAK

Where it's from: Scandinavia
Why it's worth trying: Salted licorice is popular through-
Scandinavian countries and is branded under different
names, such as Djungelval in Sweden. You must be an in-
trepid taster to try this one. It's not for everyone. But the
who are fans are exuberant.
What it's made of: Sugar, corn syrup, starch, molasses, an-
mium chloride, wheat flour, gelatin, licorice extract, artifi-
color, vegetable oil and beeswax.
Where to get it: Throughout Scandinavia and at
www.licoriceinternational.com for about \$9 a pound, plus
shipping.

BEACON FIZZERS

Where it's from: South Africa
Why it's worth trying: These tongue-tingling, bright-color
fizzes come in flavors such as cream soda and strawberry
What it's made of: Toffee with sodium bicarbonate and
artificial colors.
Where to get it: In South Africa or from www.biltongzu.com
for an unbelievable \$32 per piece, including shipping.



SALT WATER TAFFY

Where it's from: Atlantic City, N.J.
Why it's worth trying: The story goes that in the 1880s, on
Atlantic City Boardwalk, a candy merchant's goods were
soaked by a particularly high tide one night. In the morn-
young customer requested taffy; the merchant replied, "
mean saltwater taffy." The name stuck, despite the fact t