

Seasonal Analysis

Club seasonal programs are an important part of their business. From a merchandising perspective, seasonal items reinforce the “treasure hunt” atmosphere in the clubs. For example, Costco stocked an 18.2-ounce Swiss chocolate turkey wrapped in gold foil with a package of chocolate covered marshmallows inside from Ruben’s for \$19.99 (see picture on the right).

From a vendor perspective, buyers are very creative when it comes to purchasing seasonal items and suppliers need to approach its product development and sales and marketing processes using the same imagination. This chapter includes three sections: seasonal buying strategies, the 2021 summer program and the 2021 winter and holiday program.



Costco – Ruben’s Chocolate Turkey

Seasonal Buying Strategies

The following are guidelines vendors should consider when preparing and presenting seasonal items to club buyers.

Club Seasons – In the club channel, there are two primary seasonal categories, spring and summer merchandise is stocked between February and June and winter and holiday items are stocked between September and December. Club buyers do stock merchandise for other (secondary) holidays such as: St. Patrick’s Day, Easter, Valentine’s Day, Mother’ Day, Father’s Day, Halloween and the Super Bowl. However, in comparison to spring and summer and winter and holiday, the selection of items for those secondary holidays is smaller and the length of time those products are stocked is shorter.

Present Early – Vendors should prepare their sales strategies at least one year before a season. That preparation should include a visit to each club to analyze their respective seasonal assortment from the prior year. Buyer meetings should begin at least eight to ten months prior to the targeted season.

First In, First Out – Compared to other retail operators, the clubs will stock seasonal merchandise early (so members see their programs first) and sell through that inventory before the season ends (avoiding markdowns).

Margins – Generally, seasonal merchandise margins at Costco will range from 12% to 14%, which is higher than its traditional margins of 8% to 12%. Sam’s seasonal merchandise margins will likely range from 12% to 16% and BJ’s seasonal merchandise margins will likely range from 12% to 20%. BJ’s is much more likely than Costco and Sam’s Club to generate higher returns on non-competitive items.

Product Demonstrations – Product demonstrations (especially for food items) are an important part of a seasonal program and vendors need to include these in their plans.

Merchandise Guarantee/Markdown – The clubs are very conscious of moving out of a season with as little inventory as possible. They may negotiate with a vendor to guarantee the sale of an item by taking back any unsold merchandise or ask for markdown funds if an item’s sales were below plan. This effort to be clean after a season is to create immediate room for the upcoming season’s merchandise.

Exclusivity – The clubs pride themselves on discovering new and interesting items and want those products sold exclusively to them. Having a member know he can only purchase an item at one club is important for a club buyer. For example, of the 401 winter and holiday items that were stocked at all three club operators in 2021, just 12 SKUs (with the same packaging configuration) were stocked by two clubs and just one item (with the same packaging configuration) was stocked by three clubs.

2021 Summer Programs

The charts on the next page show the number of SKUs and the average retail price for each club and category from 2010, 2015, 2020 and 2021. The chart also includes two additional columns: the percentage of items per category that were also stocked the previous year (duplicate) and the number of private label items per category. For example, Costco stocked ten fan and air conditioner SKUs in 2021. Of that total, 70% or seven of the items stocked in 2021 were also stocked in 2020.

Each club was visited in late June, 2021 and early July, 2021. During this time frame, the clubs began to transition out of their summer seasonal program. Costco’s transitional assortment of furniture was even starting to be stocked. For that reason, the assortment observed at each club was smaller than it was when each 2021 summer seasonal program was fully stocked.

The following are product observations from some of the summer seasonal categories:

Camping, Fishing – Some of the unique camping and fishing items included: a set of two Attwood dock fenders for \$34.98 (Sam’s), a 1,000-lumen Cascade Mountain lantern with a USB port for \$24.99 (BJ’s), a set of three collapsible mini LED lanterns from Cascade Mountain for \$19.99 (Costco), a 30-degree hybrid sleeping bag from Core for \$39.99 (Costco), a 1,000-lumen infinity lantern with a USB port from Duracell for \$19.99 (Costco), a Habit performance fishing t-shirt for \$12.98 (Sam’s), a men’s river shirt from Habit for \$15.98 (Sam’s), a set of four personal water filter tubes that can process up to 1,000 gallons each from Lifestraw for \$49.99 (Costco) and a five-piece cast iron cooking set from Lodge for \$84.99 (Costco).

Gardening – The gardening assortment at Sam’s included: a 75-foot kink and twist free AquaJoe garden hose with a twist nozzle for \$26.98, a 20-pound bag of moss out from Lilly Miller for \$12.48, a 40-pound bag of weed and feed Member’s Mark private label fertilizer that can cover 14,000 square feet for \$31.98, two 1-gallon bottles of ready-to-use Ortho ground clear with a battery operated dispenser wand (battery included) for \$29.98, a 40-pound bag of fast acting lime from Pennington for \$16.98 and a 3.28-foot wide by 13.12-foot long roll of evergreen artificial grass from Select Surface for \$79.98.

Grills, Accessories – Some of the interesting grill and accessory SKUs included: a five-piece grilling tool set from Cuisinart with a spatula, tongs, carving fork, carving knife and shears for \$29.98 (Sam’s), a 30-pound bag of Frontier lump charcoal for \$19.98 or 66.7-cents per pound (Sam’s), a 34-pound bag of Frontier lump charcoal for \$22.99 or 67.6-cents per pound (BJ’s), a 180-square foot roll (1.5-feet wide by 120-foot long) of heavy duty grilling aluminum foil from Kingsford for \$12.99 (BJ’s) and a 12-count box of 10-inch by 15.5-inch aluminum foil grilling bags from Kingsford for \$12.99 (BJ’s).

Costco	SKU				Duplicate		PL		Average Retail			
	2010	2015	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2010	2015	2020	2021
Outdoor Products	19	29	37	33	22%	30%	4	3	\$115	\$111	\$141	\$112
Camping, Fishing	3	14	7	8	14%	13%	n/a	n/a	\$99	\$55	\$73	\$45
Fans, Air Conditioners	10	10	12	10	67%	70%	n/a	n/a	\$209	\$171	\$198	\$126
Gardening	17	21	21	19	5%	16%	1	n/a	\$34	\$37	\$41	\$42
Grill, Accessories	5	5	6	4	50%	25%	n/a	n/a	\$197	\$185	\$432	\$294
Patio Sets, Umbrellas	7	3	6	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$574	\$420	\$1,104	\$600
Beach, Pool Products	27	42	46	26	43%	58%	n/a	n/a	\$95	\$73	\$64	\$63
Total	88	124	135	101	30%	37%	5	3	\$144	\$95	\$156	\$94

BJ's	SKU				Duplicate		PL		Average Retail			
	2010	2015	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2010	2015	2020	2021
Outdoor Products	38	84	61	40	34%	45%	11	7	\$100	\$118	\$57	\$105
Camping, Fishing	4	13	8	3	38%	100%	n/a	n/a	\$27	\$53	\$25	\$18
Fans, Air Conditioners	10	14	11	15	45%	20%	n/a	n/a	\$152	\$167	\$186	\$187
Gardening	22	51	25	28	56%	28%	n/a	4	\$32	\$55	\$35	\$29
Grill, Accessories	18	35	30	30	47%	60%	n/a	1	\$35	\$81	\$114	\$104
Patio Sets, Umbrellas	9	8	7	6	n/a	n/a	6	6	\$658	\$0	\$653	\$1,117
Beach, Pool Products	42	103	65	54	34%	22%	2	7	\$95	\$73	\$66	\$64
Total	143	308	207	176	38%	35%	19	25	\$104	\$93	\$91	\$120

Sam's Club	SKU				Duplicate		PL		Average Retail			
	2010	2015	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2010	2015	2020	2021
Outdoor Products	22	33	50	42	22%	26%	19	7	\$183	\$110	\$125	\$64
Camping, Fishing	n/a	3	16	7	38%	71%	6	1	n/a	\$63	\$65	\$23
Fans, Air Conditioners	10	14	16	10	81%	90%	n/a	n/a	\$118	\$223	\$186	\$180
Gardening	28	32	42	21	33%	62%	14	2	\$32	\$50	\$53	\$30
Grill, Accessories	16	20	12	14	56%	36%	6	7	\$240	\$169	\$214	\$204
Patio Sets, Umbrellas	5	3	7	2	29%	n/a	7	2	\$415	\$71	\$1,329	\$2,150
Beach, Pool Products	31	34	36	15	44%	53%	15	6	\$51	\$65	\$59	\$63
Total	112	139	179	111	38%	46%	67	25	\$124	\$103	\$148	\$121

Other grill and accessory items included: a four burner Member’s Mark pro series gas grill that includes marketing comparing it to the Weber Genesis II E-310 gas grill for \$799.00 (Sam’s) and a portable Weber Q-1200 gas grill for \$319.99 (BJ’s).

Beach, Pool Products – BJ’s beach and pool selection included: an Arctic Zone backpack cooler with padded straps that can hold 28 cans for \$24.99, a package of three 7.3-ounce cans of Berkley & Jensen private label SPF 50 sport sunscreen spray for \$11.99 and a Lifetime 12-foot spiffire kayak with two paddles for \$549.99.

Costco was the only club to stock Alba Botanical sunscreen: a package of two 6-ounce bottles of SPF 50 biodegradable sunscreen (one bottle each of sensitive and Hawaiian) for \$13.99. Other beach and pool products at Costco included: a set of four Arctic Cool instant cooling towels for \$19.99, an 11-foot inflatable paddleboard from Body Glove for \$399.99, a Coho rto molded cooler that keeps ice for more than five days for \$119.99 and a 164-quart max cold cooler from Igloo for \$99.99.

Food Products – While WCF did not record every summer seasonal food item, the following are some of the unique SKUs at each club. Costco stocked a control/private label 57-ounce ice cream party box for \$17.79. The box included: Hershey syrup, Joy ice cream waffle cones, Nerds rainbow candy, Black Forest mini gummy bears, M&M milk chocolate candy, Nabisco oreos, rainbow sprinkles, marshmallows, Solo plastic cups and Solo plastic spoons.

BJ’s stocked: a 36-count box of 0.23-ounce Joy jumbo ice cream cones for \$4.99, a 17-ounce bag of Stuffed Puffs chocolate filled marshmallows that were designed for making smores for \$6.99 and a 28.55-ounce smores kit from Hershey with graham crackers, marshmallows and milk chocolate bars for \$9.99.

Sam’s summer seasonal food selection included: a 24-ounce box of Hershey’s summer toppings with three 8-ounce bags of mini Reese’s, mini Kit Kats and mini Reese’s pieces for \$9.98, a box of twelve 2-ounce cups of Fun Sweet cotton candy (six watermelon, three orange cream and three pink lemonade) for \$9.98, a 32-ounce container of red, white and blue Ring Pops for \$9.98, a 38-ounce container of red, white and blue wrapped mini Reese’s cups from Hershey for \$10.48 and a 32-count box of red, white and blue Ding Dongs (16) and Twinkies (16) from Hostess for \$6.98.

Online – The following are some of the unique online items stocked on each company’s web site. Items whose retail prices do not include shipping will list “plus shipping” in the item’s description.

BJs.com – The online summer seasonal assortment at BJ’s.com included: a 13-amp electric leaf mulcher and shredder from Sun Joe for \$129.99, a 50-bag pallet of NuScape 100% recycled red rubber mulch (40-pound bags) for \$789.99, a 16-ounce bottle of Just Scentsational coyote urine that keeps certain pests away for \$24.99, a Pit Boss 22-inch ceramic kamado charcoal grill for \$899.99 and Pit Boss cast iron cooking set with a 10-inch cast iron skillet, a 12-inch deep cast iron skillet, a 10-inch camp oven with a lid and a heavy duty leather cooking glove for \$89.99.

Costco.com – The online summer seasonal assortment at Costco.com included: a set of four Omega Italian-made commercial chaise lounge chairs for \$999.99, a Centurion five-piece garden set with a collapsible carry-all bucket, a hand trowel, a hand rake, a memory foam garden kneeler and a hoe/cultivator combo tool for \$49.99, a set of three (live) wintergreen boxwood shrubs for \$79.99, a (live) Washington semi-dwarf navel orange tree from Alder & Oak for \$64.99, a set of four (live) azalea plants from Alder & Oak for \$69.99 and a 14-foot by 29-foot 6-inch professional triple-walled greenhouse with two roof vents and two Dutch barn doors from Exaco Riga for \$14,999.99.

Samsclub.com – The online summer seasonal selection at Samsclub.com included: a 2,000-pound bag of GroundSmart rubber red cedar mulch for \$759.00, a Worx 40-volt 14-inch cordless chainsaw with auto-tension for \$199.98 (plus shipping), a Viking four-piece cast iron cookware set with a Dutch oven and lid, a frying pan and a grill pan for \$249.98 (plus shipping) and an Igloo 10-gallon handwash station with a push-lever spigot, a soap caddy and reinforced side handles for \$59.98.

2021 Winter and Holiday Programs

This section analyzes the winter and holiday programs stocked at BJ's, Costco and Sam's Club. Locations in Massachusetts and New Hampshire were visited in November, 2021 to gather the data and information. The winter and holiday programs include eight categories: winter non-food products, holiday kitchen and bathroom items, holiday gift and accessories, holiday decorations, holiday grocery products, holiday perishable SKUs, holiday candy and holiday gift baskets.

For the purposes of this analysis, winter and holiday items are primarily stocked between September and December, generate a majority of their annual sales from September to December or can be a seasonally themed or packaged item that may also stocked on an everyday basis beyond the September to December time period. Items in the following categories are not counted for this winter and holiday analysis: bread and bakery, apparel (except for some outdoor items), frozen appetizers, toys and video games, books and music.

2021 Item Data Charts – The charts on the right show the number of SKUs and the average retail price for each warehouse club and category from 2011, 2016, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

The charts also include three additional columns, the percentage of items per category and the percentage of private label items per category that were also stocked the previous year (duplicate).

For example, Costco stocked 23 holiday candy items in 2021. Of that total, 48% or 11 products were also stocked in 2020. Additionally, in the chart on page three, Costco's holiday food assortment included six private label items in 2021. Of that total, 83% or five SKUs were also stocked in 2020.

Winter – Winter products are defined as non-holiday items that are stocked from September to December. Costco stocked the most winter SKUs among the three clubs with 34 items, none of which were under its Kirkland Signature private label brand. Costco's 2021 winter assortment was significantly higher than its 2019 selection at 20 items and higher than its 2020 assortment at 28 products.

Sam's stocked 24 winter products, five of which were under its Member's Mark brand and BJ's stocked 23 winter SKUs, five of which were under its Berkley & Jensen brand. The following are observations from the winter holiday programs at each club.

BJ's – The winter selection at BJ's included: a Berkley & Jensen 5,100-btu indoor or outdoor patio heater that is wind and rain resistant for \$149.99, a Berkley & Jensen wood burning fire pit for \$179.99, a case of nine 4.5-pound Duraflame gold fire logs for \$27.99 (Sam's stocked the same item for \$24.98), a case of forty 4.5-ounce Duraflame quick start fire starters for \$16.99 (Sam's stocked the same item for \$13.97), an ONIX portable oscillating ceramic heater for \$29.99, a 0.5-cubic foot bundle of kiln dried firewood logs from Simple Simon for \$7.99 and a Snow Joe 18-inch electric snow blower for \$219.99.

Costco		SKU					Duplicate			Average Retail				
Season	Category	2011	2016	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2011	2016	2019	2020	2021
Winter	Non-Food	25	31	20	28	34	40%	32%	53%	n/a	\$48	\$102	\$25	\$68
	Total	25	31	20	28	34	40%	32%	53%					
	Private Label	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a					
Holiday Non-Food	Kitchen, Bathroom	3	5	3	3	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$46	\$50	\$58	\$53	\$55
	Gift, Accessories	15	11	8	9	9	75%	56%	78%					
	Decorations	31	39	37	34	29	24%	9%	24%					
Holiday Food	Total	49	55	48	46	42	31%	17%	33%	\$16	\$12	\$14	\$17	\$14
	Private Label	27	38	34	29	27	38%	24%	37%					
	Grocery	12	15	19	27	23	53%	37%	48%					
Holiday Food	Perishable	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	3	1%	13%	33%	\$16	\$12	\$14	\$17	\$14
	Candy	21	14	16	23	23	44%	35%	48%					
	Gift Basket	10	5	4	5	3	n/a	n/a	n/a					
	Total	43	34	47	58	50	38%	33%	44%					
	Private Label	6	4	6	8	6	67%	63%	83%					

BJ's Wholesale		SKU					Duplicate			Average Retail				
Season	Category	2011	2016	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2011	2016	2019	2020	2021
Winter	Non-Food	30	48	26	20	23	35%	40%	30%	n/a	\$38	\$47	\$43	\$92
	Total	30	48	26	20	23	35%	40%	30%					
	Private Label	n/a	n/a	2	1	5	50%	100%	n/a					
Holiday Non-Food	Kitchen, Bathroom	17	14	27	20	6	n/a	5%	n/a	\$41	\$39	\$35	\$36	\$51
	Gift, Accessories	19	28	18	18	13	50%	61%	54%					
	Decorations	52	68	42	43	54	48%	53%	44%					
Holiday Food	Total	88	110	87	81	73	33%	43%	42%	\$15	\$17	\$15	\$15	\$15
	Private Label	30	25	32	30	44	44%	63%	39%					
	Grocery	17	13	15	19	14	47%	32%	29%					
Holiday Food	Perishable	1	1	7	6	4	29%	67%	75%	\$15	\$17	\$15	\$15	\$15
	Candy	29	27	18	33	29	33%	27%	34%					
	Gift Basket	14	17	11	15	8	n/a	n/a	n/a					
	Total	61	58	51	73	55	29%	26%	31%					
	Private Label	7	7	1	3	4	n/a	33%	25%					

Sam's Club		SKU					Duplicate			Average Retail				
Season	Category	2011	2016	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2011	2016	2019	2020	2021
Winter	Non-Food	27	22	29	21	24	48%	48%	29%	n/a	\$46	\$41	\$38	\$58
	Total	27	22	29	21	24	48%	48%	29%					
	Private Label	n/a	n/a	3	3	5	33%	33%	40%					
Holiday Non-Food	Kitchen, Bathroom	11	7	5	7	6	60%	43%	50%	\$36	\$55	\$63	\$47	\$44
	Gift, Accessories	9	6	10	10	9	60%	60%	78%					
	Decorations	28	23	36	22	20	39%	59%	60%					
Holiday Food	Total	48	36	51	39	35	45%	56%	63%	\$15	\$15	\$15	\$14	\$14
	Private Label	30	28	41	30	24	51%	63%	75%					
	Grocery	13	12	21	30	30	43%	37%	37%					
Holiday Food	Perishable	n/a	2	8	4	8	25%	n/a	13%	\$15	\$15	\$15	\$14	\$14
	Candy	13	15	26	28	26	42%	43%	31%					
	Gift Basket	16	14	13	14	15	31%	14%	20%					
	Total	42	43	68	76	79	38%	33%	29%					
	Private Label	2	1	4	3	4	100%	100%	75%					

Costco – The winter assortment at Costco included: a set of two Boss deerskin winter work gloves for \$24.99, an 84-inch by 90-inch heated blanket from Brookstone for \$79.99, a Greenworks 22-inch cordless snow blower with batteries and a charger from Greenworks for \$699.99 (see picture on the right), a 30-pair case of Little Hotties toe warmers for \$13.99, a Polarmade 28-inch wide snow plow shovel for \$39.99, a pair of Spyder core conduct gloves for \$14.99, a 17-inch by 35-inch rubber boot tray from Step Guard for \$9.99, a 20-inch Suncast shovel with a foam grip and a galvanized wear strip for \$19.99 (Sam's stocked the same item for \$19.98), a pair of Tech Gear mobile heated gloves with a waterproof lining and a five-volt lithium battery for \$99.99 and a Vornado vortex whole room heater for \$84.99.



Costco – Greenworks Snow Blower

Sam's Club – Some of the unique winter items at Sam's Club included: a Big Buddy portable liquid propane radiant heater with a fan for \$129.98, a set of two emergency shovels from Bird Rock Home (one blue and one black) for \$26.98 (Costco stocked the same product with both shovels in red for \$26.99), a Bond portable gas fire pit for \$129.98, a pair of Member's Mark kids snow boots for \$14.98, a Member's Mark 58-inch snow broom and a hand scraper for \$15.98, a Member's Mark infrared tower heater with a remote control for \$79.98 (Sam's stocked this item last year), a set of two Muddy rechargeable hand warmers with a waterproof housing for \$39.98 (Sam's stocked this item last year), a Peet executive shoe dryer with four drying ports for \$59.98, a 25-pound bag of Road Runner pet friendly ice melt for \$14.98 and a Snow Joe 10-inch cordless 24-volt snow shovel with a battery and a charger for \$99.98.

Holiday Food - Sam's Club stocked the largest holiday food assortment with 79 items, two of which were under its Member's Mark brand and two of which were under its SCM Designs control label. The 2021 holiday food assortment at Sam's Club was higher than its 2019 selection at 68 products and its 2020 assortment at 76 items. Costco stocked 50 holiday food items, six of which were under its Kirkland Signature brand. Costco's 2021 holiday food assortment was lower compared to 2020 when it stocked 58 items but higher compared to 2019 when it stocked 47 SKUs.

BJ's stocked 55 holiday food products, four of which were under its Wellesley Farms private label brand. BJ's 2021 holiday food selection was significantly lower compared to 2020 when it stocked 70 products but higher compared to 2019 when it stocked 50 SKUs. BJ's more dramatic assortment reduction in 2021 could be due to late arriving product as a result of supply chain challenges. The following are observations from some of the holiday food categories at each club.



Sam's – Rice Krispie Treats

Seasonal Themes, Packages – One of the holiday strategies at Sam's Club that is unique compared to BJ's and Costco is its use of seasonal themes and/or packaging on items that are typically stocked year-round.

Those items included: a 34.75-ounce box of holiday themed sugar cookie toast crunch cereal from General Mills for \$4.98, a 12-tub case of Fun Sweets holiday cotton candy (four each of candy cane, hot cocoa and vanilla snow) for \$9.98, a case of eighty-five 0.5-ounce packages of Welch's fruit snacks with Santa and a Christmas theme on the packaging for \$9.98, a box of fifty-two 0.39-ounce mini rice krispie treats with a holiday theme and snow globe on the packaging from Kellogg's for \$6.87 (see picture on the left), a winter-themed box of Nabisco oreos with thirty 1.02-ounce packages of double stuff oreos (two per pack) and fifteen 0.72-ounce packages of white fudge covered oreos for \$11.98, a 32-count package of Hostess holiday-themed twinkies (16) and cupcakes (16) for \$7.98 and a 24-ounce bag of Xochitl red and green corn chips for \$4.98.

BJ's – The holiday grocery assortment at BJ's included: a Create-A-Treat cookie decorating kit with candy, icing and 16 cookies for \$10.99, a 30.25-ounce Create-A-Treat oreo cookie house for \$12.99, a 72-count box of Starbucks holiday blend Kcups for \$37.49 (Costco stocked the same item for \$29.99) and four 6.9-ounce Swiss Miss holiday tins of hot chocolate (one each of chocolate, peppermint, marshmallow and caramel) for \$12.99.

The holiday candy selection at BJ's included: a 40-count package of Brach's candy canes for \$5.99, a 17.5-ounce box of Demet's chocolate turtles for \$9.99 (BJ's stocked this item last year), a 20.21-ounce box of Dove assorted truffles for \$14.99 (Sam's stocked the same item for \$14.98), a 15.4-ounce box of golden gallery chocolate (42-pieces) from Ferrero for \$14.99 (Costco stocked the same item for \$13.99), a package of sixteen 1.6-ounce mini hot chocolate bombs (four each of milk chocolate, peppermint, double chocolate and salted caramel) for \$19.99, a 39.8-ounce bag of Reese's peanut butter Christmas trees (65-pieces) from Hershey for \$10.99 (Sam's stocked the same item for \$8.98), two 7-ounce chocolate teddy bears from Lindt for \$14.99, a 14.1-ounce box of Merci holiday chocolate for \$9.99 or 71-cents per ounce (Costco stocked a 23.81-ounce box of the same item for \$10.79 or 45-cents per ounce) and a 14.8-ounce box of Wellesley Farms Belgian chocolate for \$12.99.

Costco – The holiday candy selection at Costco included: a 24-ounce bag of Bartons holiday mingle mix (dark chocolate covered pretzels, milk and dark chocolate covered caramel corn, milk and dark chocolate peanut butter cups, milk chocolate covered pretzel balls, nonpareils, chocolate sandwich cookie pieces and red gems) for \$9.49, a 32-ounce bag of Bouchard individually wrapped Belgian dark chocolate for \$11.79 and three 5.64-ounce boxes of Gudrun Belgian chocolate for \$11.99.

Some of the unique holiday grocery items observed at Costco included: a 60-ounce Create-A-Treat pre-built gingerbread house kit (the company's largest pre-built house) with one-pound of candy and icing for \$11.99, a 32-ounce tin/container of David's buttercream pecan meltaway cookies for \$9.99, an 11.25-ounce organic turkey brining kit with a poultry rub, master brine and brine bag from Kinder's for \$6.99, a 35.27-ounce package of Kirkland Signature cantuccini almond biscotti from Italy for \$8.59, a 44.48-ounce box of Le Chef caramel stroopwafel for \$9.59, a 21.16-ounce package of La Grande Galette French butter cookies from St. Michel for \$9.99 and a 26.6-ounce giant gingerbread man decorating kit from Stockmeyer for \$8.99.

Sam's Club – The holiday candy selection at Sam's Club included ten items from Hershey. Some of those products included: a 35.28-ounce bag of assorted mint chocolate (mint Kit Kats, candy cane Kisses, mint truffle Kisses and York snowflakes) for \$10.48, a case of twenty-four 1.2-ounce full size bars of Reese's peanut butter Christmas trees for \$24.22, three 8-ounce half pound Reese's peanut butter cups for \$13.48, a 25.5-ounce package of stocking stuffers with 18 full size bars (six each of Kit Kats, chocolate sugar cookie bars and Reese's peanut butter Christmas trees) for \$12.98 and a 35.3-ounce bag of holiday mini candy with Reese's peanut butter cups, Kisses and chocolate bars for \$9.98.

Sam's holiday candy assortment also included: three 16-ounce packages of French dusted chocolate truffles from Chocmod for \$9.98, a 15-count package of Doscher's gourmet peppermint candy canes for \$14.98 and a 19-ounce bag of Lindt snicker doodle white chocolate truffles for \$9.98.

The gift basket selection at Sam's Club included: a 10.672-ounce Holiday Countdown gift basket from DesignPac with 24 treats that included chocolate, shortbread cookies, popcorn and chocolate truffles for \$16.98, an 11.57-ounce Gourmet Gifts gift basket from Ghirardelli with a glass bowl containing chocolate, cookies, popcorn and hot cocoa mix for \$24.98, a Handstand Kitchen hot chocolate bomb making kit with two silicone molds, a silicone spatula, a brush, a silicone melting pot and lid, stir sticks and 20 gift bags for \$19.98, a 62.72-ounce Charcuterie gift basket with a board, crackers, cheese, olives, mustard, tapas, preserves, snack mix and jerky from Houdini for \$39.98 and a 73.3-ounce Lasting Impression gift basket with a reusable basket, cookies, mustard, olives, popcorn, cheese spread and crackers for \$49.98.

Some of the unique holiday grocery items at Sam's Club included: a 54-count box of Dunkin Donuts egg nogg spice Kcups for \$27.98, an 18-ounce bag of Fannie May peppermint s'mores snack mix for \$9.98, a 22-ounce Cheetos holiday tin with a 15-ounce bag of crunchy Cheetos and a seven-ounce bag of Cheetos popcorn from Frito Lay for \$8.98, a 49.4-ounce box of Member's Mark European chocolate cookies for \$11.98, a 24-ounce bag of Safe and Fair chocolate candy cane granola for \$7.67 and a 54.17-ounce pre-built gingerbread house kit from Wilton for \$11.98.

Holiday Non-Food – BJ's stocked the most holiday non-food items with 73 SKUs, 44 of which were under its Berkley & Jensen brand. BJ's 2021 holiday non-food selection is smaller compared to its 2019 assortment of 87 SKUs and its 2020 selection of 81 products. Costco stocked 42 holiday non-food products, 27 of which were under its Kirkland Signature and CWC control label brands. Costco's 2021 holiday non-food selection is smaller compared to its 2019 assortment of 48 SKUs and its 2020 selection of 46 products.

Sam's stocked 35 holiday non-food SKUs, 24 were under its Member's Mark brand. Sam's 2021 holiday non-food selection is smaller compared to its 2019 assortment of 51 SKUs and its 2020 selection of 39 products. It is possible that the smaller 2021 holiday non-food assortment at each club may be due to late arriving product as a result of supply chain challenges. The following are observations from some of the holiday non-food categories at each club.

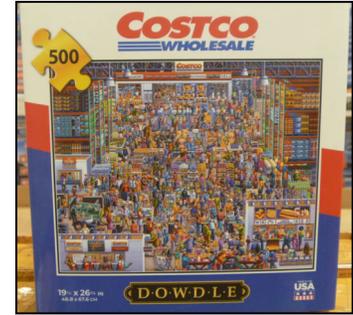
BJ's – Some of the unique holiday non-food products at BJ's included: a 15-count package of Berkley & Jensen gift bags for \$14.99, four Berkley & Jensen gift card holders for \$8.99, a 42-inch Berkley & Jensen candy cane for \$59.99, a seven-foot Christmas tree from Berkley & Jensen with 350 multicolor LED lights, a metal tree stand and on/off foot pedal for \$119.99, a six-piece pre-lit greenery set with a 24-inch wreath, two 9-foot garlands, two 4-foot porch trees and a 15-inch wreath hangar from Berkley & Jensen for \$139.99, a 72-inch pre-lit decorated Berkley & Jensen lamp post for \$59.99, an 11-piece children's nativity set from Berkley & Jensen for \$19.99, a 60-inch outdoor pre-lit wreath from Berkley & Jensen for \$179.99, a nine-foot Christmas tree with 1,000 color LED lights from Sylvania for \$349.99 and two outdoor Sylvania digital timers that turn power on at dusk and off at dawn for \$16.99.

Costco – The holiday non-food SKUs at Costco included: a holiday ceramic Santa cookie tray from CWC for \$19.99, a 24-piece dog advent calendar with eight toys and 16 treats from Delca for \$37.99, a 7.5-foot Christmas tree with 1,850 micro LED lights from CWC for \$399.99, a set of 18 hand decorated glass ornaments from CWC for \$25.99, a twenty-inch wide by 19.4-inch tall oversized battery operated indoor or outdoor ornament that is 12.8-pounds from CWC for \$79.99, a holiday Snoopy and Woody doghouse from CWC for \$49.99, a gold or silver indoor tree collar from CWC for \$44.99, a set of two WIFI-enabled smart outdoor plugs with voice control from Feit Electric for \$29.99 and a set of four Disney Mickey Mouse-shaped glass ornaments from Hallmark for \$24.99.

Sam's Club – Some of the unique holiday non-food products at Sam's Club included: a 35-piece dog advent calendar with grain free treats from Fresco for \$9.98, a 13-inch pre-lit indoor gingerbread house from Member's Mark for \$29.98, a Seiko melodies in motion holiday clock with 36 songs and is made with 13 Swarovski crystals for \$99.98, a 100-count package of two-ply napkins with a snow drift theme from Artstyle for \$6.48 and a 180-count bag of Member's Mark 18-ounce holiday plastic cups (45 each of red, green, silver and brown) for \$11.48.

Toy Observations – While the entire toy selection at each club was not recorded, there are three observations, one at each club, that we wanted to highlight. Historically, and in 2021, Costco stocked an assortment of Dowdle 500-piece and 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzles. The 2021 assortment included a 500-piece and a 1,000-piece Costco Wholesale jigsaw puzzle from Dowdle each for \$9.99 (see picture on the right).

BJ's toy selection included ten exclusive toy SKUs. One of those items was a ZURU 5 Surprise 37-piece mini-mart with actual brands and candy for \$29.99. Sam's toy selection included four Member's Mark SKUs: a kitchen play center with 16 accessories for \$99.98, a vanity play set for \$49.98 (see picture on the next page), a set of four mini vehicles/cars for \$16.98 and a set of two pajama party sister dolls with 15 accessories for \$19.98.



Costco – Dowdle Costco Puzzle

Online – The following are observations from the winter and holiday online assortments from BJs.com, Costco.com and Samsclub.com. Shipping is included in the retail prices in this section unless otherwise noted.

BJs.com – The winter online selection at BJs.com included: a Snow Joe 15-amp electric snow blower with an 18-inch width and a halogen light for \$159.99, a Snow Joe 11-inch cordless snow shovel with a battery and charger with a maximum charge of 140 minutes for \$164.99 and a Black & Decker 1,500-watt infrared quartz tower heater for \$49.99.

The holiday food and non-food online assortment at BJs.com included: a Puleo International indoor and outdoor six-foot lighted palm tree for \$89.99, a National Tree 90-inch Jersey fraser fir Christmas tree with 1,250 clear lights for \$549.99, a 12-count case of 2.5-inch wide by 36-foot long rolls of shimmery silver wire edge ribbon from Northlight for \$54.99, a Northlight 30-inch flocked Victoria pine Christmas wreath with 100 clear lights and a heavy duty metal frame for \$89.99, a Northlight 60-inch canyon pine Christmas wreath with 400 LED lights and a sturdy frame for hanging for \$499.99, a Northlight five-foot Christmas nutcracker with a red and gold crown holding a scepter for \$999.99 and a Northlight 26.5-inch diameter red Christmas ornament with a snowflake decoration and 48 clear LED lights for \$689.99.

Costco.com – The winter online assortment at Costco.com included: two 30-pair boxes of Little Hotties toe warmers for \$33.99, a pair of Wolverine leather winter gloves that are touch screen enabled for \$49.99, a Little Hotties footwear, glove and helmet dryer with four drying tubes for \$49.99, a Yukon stainless steel hammerhead pro sled with polycarbonate front skis and a 220-pound weight limit for \$199.99, a Briggs & Stratton 26-inch dual stage snow blower with an electric start 208cc engine for \$799.99, a Suncoast 36-inch pusher snow shovel with a non-stick surface for \$49.99 and a SnowPeeler commercial-grade 30-foot sectional rooftop snow removal tool that weighs 13.2-pounds for \$139.99.

The holiday food and non-food online selection at Costco.com included: a six-foot to seven-foot fresh/live fraser fir Christmas tree for \$139.99, a set of eight 32-inch decorative seasonal white birch poles that are 1.5-inches to two-inches thick and are fresh cut for \$29.99, an eight-foot indoor and outdoor nutcracker with 20 LED lights and can play eight holiday songs for \$649.99, a Waterford five-inch wide by three-inch tall golden bell ornament with a keepsake box for storage for \$39.99, a Waterford crystal snow star ornament with a 2021 polished metal tag and a keepsake box for storage for \$49.99, a 60-unit pallet of Godiva gold and red holiday five-box gift towers with chocolate, chocolate truffles, chocolate coffee, chocolate grahams and chocolate pretzels for \$2,499.99, 24 tins of David's winter wonderland mini cookies with each tin containing twenty-eight 0.5-ounce chocolate chip, red velvet and double chocolate chip cookies for \$249.99 and a case of four 16-ounce tins of Truffettes de France cocoa truffles for \$32.99.

Samsclub.com – The winter online selection at Samsclub.com included: a 49-bag pallet of MELT premium environmentally blended ice melt (each bag is 50-pounds) for \$689.00, a 50-pound resealable bag of MELT calcium chloride ice melt for \$18.84 and a Snow Joe telescoping snow broom with an ice scraper handle that extends up to 49-inches for \$15.98.

The holiday food and non-food online assortment at Samsclub.com included: two 12-ounce bags of Utz holiday chocolate and white fudge covered pretzels for \$21.96, a 13.5-ounce tin of snowflake-shaped peppermint bark bites from Harry & David for \$14.98, two 11.9-ounce holiday chocolate truffle canisters (one pretzel chocolate truffle and one pecan chocolate truffle) from Prestige Confiseur for \$26.98 and a 44-ounce holiday snack bag of popcorn from The Popcorn Factory (caramel, kettle, chocolate crunch, snicker doodle and ranch) for \$15.77.

Sam's Club Extras – According to a November 3, 2021 social media post by Tony Rogers, chief member office at Sam's Club, the club operator is partnering with Laugh Out Loud's LOL Studios and Kevin Hart to promote its 2021 holiday program. The campaign will feature a series of social media videos and in-club appearances where Hart will act as a "manager" of a Sam's Club talking about its 2021 holiday products and the convenient ways to shop at the club operator.

Earlier in 2021, Sam's launched its own food truck that serves Member's Mark private label food for free at select locations. The food truck has been updated to promote some of its holiday private label items that include: appetizers, a cheese board, dips, salad, cappuccino, ice cream, French toast sticks and brownies. The Member's Mark holiday food truck will visit 65 locations during the 2021 holiday season.

Five locations (Santa Clarita, CA, Denver, CO, Moore, OK, Plano, TX and Pooler, GA) will host a special Merry-ville parking lot event with an ice skating rink, a virtual Santa meet and greet, holiday decorated stations for families to take photos, a human claw machine and a holiday chalet featuring Sam's Club merchandise. The food truck visit to the other 60 locations will feature a smaller version of the Merry-ville parking lot event.

Notes