

# Spreading Easter cheer with organic jelly beans and beer

According to those folks who track such things, the average person will spend \$17.29 on Easter candy this year. That's a 4 percent increase over last year, according to research by the National Retail Federation.

That amount of dough can fill a few baskets full with jelly beans.

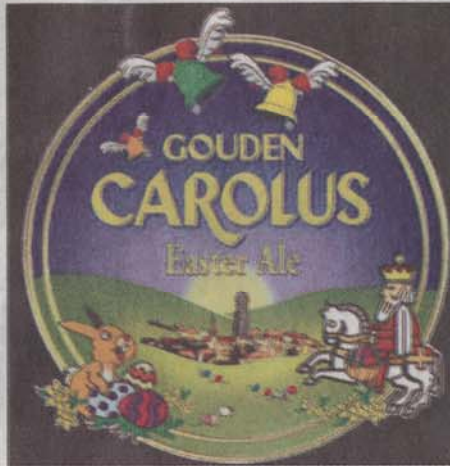
## From the food editor

My new favorite jelly bean comes right from a suburb just down the road. Surf Sweets in Prospect Heights

makes jelly beans with organic fruit juice and natural sweeteners. You won't find artificial flavors or color or gluten, dairy, egg, soy or other food allergens in these brightly flavored candies, but you will find an extra burst of vitamin C.

Not many products that I offer to co-workers get a unanimous thumbs-up like these did during a recent tasting. The real fruit taste and lack of the waxy shell were cited as the biggest pluses.

Surf Sweets Jelly Beans come in individual .9-ounce packages (just 90 calories a bag) that cost 79 cents. You can find them and other candies in the Surf Sweets line (gummy bears, sour worms ...) at Whole Foods Markets.



Don't discount beer for your Easter menu.

at Beer Advocate (as well as this discriminating palate) agree that the rich, dark ale hits the mark.

The brewery produces only 2,000 cases once a year and some of those are headed to our area thanks to Lincolnwood-based distributor, Louis Glunz Beer, Inc.

Share a 25.4-ounce corked bottled (\$10.99) with guests this holiday, or put it in the back of your pantry and pull it out a year or two from now for more complex

Cooking Expo April 17 and 18 in Lisle.

Gluten, the protein found in wheat, barley and rye, has been linked with a variety of health concerns including celiac disease and autism.

Culinary experts, authors, nutritionists and vendors will share their expertise and some samples in an effort to show that gluten-free does not mean flavor-free.

The event, in its third year, runs 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day and features a children's activity area and a vendor fair with 60 companies showcasing their goods at the Wyndham Hotel, 3000 Warrenville Road.

Advance registration is required for the cooking sessions. Tickets cost \$315 for two days; \$170 for one day (lunch and vendor fair admission included). Register at [gfreelife.com](http://gfreelife.com) or call (847) 217-1317.

