

# GROCERY-STORE SHELVES SHOW PLENTY OF TEAM SPIRIT

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I don't know what chocolate-covered, cinnamon Gummi Bears have to do with Ohio State, but I like them.

Ditto for the refreshing Buckeyes Gum, whose packaging encourages me to "chew with pride."

I'm not going to question a good thing, not when I've got a spread of tasty treats sitting before me. Victory never tasted so good — and the Ohio State vs. Michigan game hasn't even taken place yet.

Forget about what happens on the field, I'm talking about the smorgasbord of food products practically screaming for local fans to buy them before Saturday's kickoff. A recent visit to local grocery stores turned up more than a dozen items marketed specifically for excited backers of the Buckeyes and Wolverines.

For Ohio State fans, there are plump, juicy Buckeye Hot Dogs touting the team's 2002 national championship. There are tortilla chips called Buckeye Bites that helpfully provide the lyrics to the school's alma mater, "Carmen Ohio," on the back.



Ohio State and Michigan food products available in the Toledo area include cereal, hot dogs and mustard, snack chips, and candy and gum. (THE BLADE/MOLLY CORFMAN)

OSU supporters can get a jump on the day with a morning bowl of Buckeye Heroes, a cereal that looks and tastes like Honey Nut Cheerios. One difference is this brand has three hulking linebackers from last year's team on the front of the box and fun facts about the players on the back, including this one about Anthony Schlegel: "He goes wild boar hunting with just a knife and a dog."

Don't forget the Buckeye Mini Pretzels covered in yogurt and drizzled with scarlet and gray. Or the aforementioned Buckeye CinnaBears, which tasted much better than expected.

Some products come in versions for both Buckeyes and Wolverines.

Buckeye Gum is joined by an identical, "superlatively refreshing" Michigan gum. And both sides have a tangy dipping mustard from Herlocher's and a "tailgate" mustard from Barhyte Specialty Foods. (For the record, nothing bad happens when you put Michigan mustard on a Buckeye hot dog.)

M&Ms offers special My Team Colors packages, some with scarlet and gray, others with maize and blue. Despite many, many blind taste tests — hey, I'm truly committed to my job — I was unable to determine a difference in flavor between the rival candies. But I promise to keep trying.

(Ohio State fans take note: There are still "M"s on the OSU candies. Sorry.)

The two schools even have separate pasta salad packages. The Michigan version includes "M"-shaped pasta, some of the pieces colored blue. Ohio State's has "O"-shaped pasta, some of the pieces red.

The final product tasted fine, but it was a little creepy when the Michigan pasta turned the water a light blue as I boiled it.

If you're a Michigan fan, you've probably noticed there don't seem to be as many products for your side. I found varying explanations for this at area grocery stores.

Jan Smith, food market manager for The Andersons store on Talmadge Road, said it might have to do with Ohio State being more aggressive in licensing products.

A cashier at a supermarket across the border in Michigan had an alternative theory about why there were fewer Wolverine eats on the shelves. She claimed the man who orders food for the store is an Ohio State fan.

One Michigan fan in a position to do something about this is Brenda Reynolds, owner of Superior Chocolates in Toledo.

Every year, she makes hordes of chocolate and peanut butter buckeyes for OSU fans. So far, she doesn't have an equivalent for the Wolverines (though next year, she may introduce some chocolate paw prints).

For the time being, even she enjoys buckeyes.

"I eat them," she said. "Chocolate's good. It doesn't make a difference."

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