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WSJ.com

FOOD & DRINK | APRIL 23, 2011

# A Sweet to Root For

*Four black licorices that pass the test*

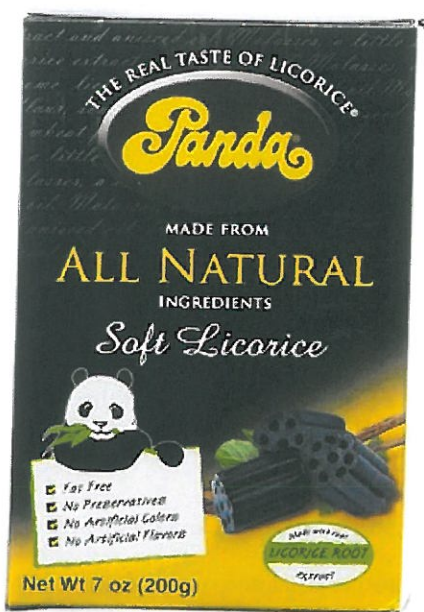
One of man's most ancient treats, black licorice is a yummy snack that doesn't come with an extra serving of guilt. Traditionally made with little more than wheat flour and molasses, it's flavored with the extract of the *Glycyrrhiza glabra* root, often along with anise oil. Some claim it can settle upset stomachs, soothe coughs and reduce congestion.

"Not all my customers like it," says Diane Campbell, who stocks over 20 kinds at The Candy Store, her shop in San Francisco. "But those that do buy it by the pound."

We decided to taste all the brands that we've been seeing at the grocery store, plus a few more obscure varieties. After experiencing the burn of a double-salted variety, and nearly losing a tooth on a particularly chewy Dutch coin, we settled on these four easy-to-find, soft black licorices as our favorites.

—Emily Kaiser Thelin

### *Panda Licorice Chews*

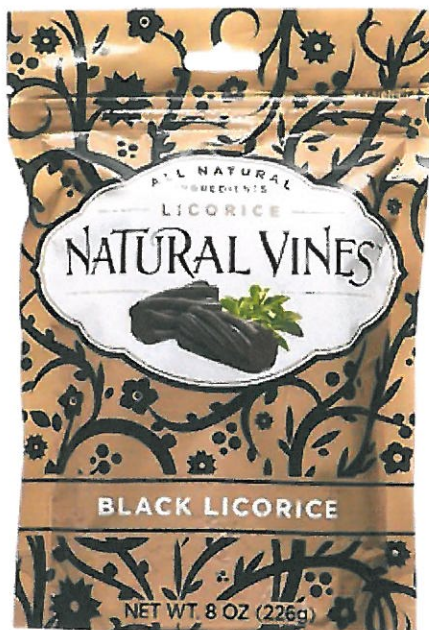


**The goods:** Panda is Finland's most popular licorice brand. These hollowed tubes are one of the few truly all-natural licorices, made with only molasses, wheat flour, licorice extract and aniseed oil.

**Tasting notes:** Toothsome, almost tough, with a subdued, smoky flavor.

**The skinny:** 15 pieces = 130 calories and 0 grams of fat. \$3 for 7 ounces, [pandalicorice.com](http://pandalicorice.com)

F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal

*Natural Vines Black Licorice*

F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal

**The goods:** The American Licorice Company, best known for being producers of the classic West Coast candy Red Vines, started selling these sweets nationwide last year.

**Tasting notes:** Pleasantly dense, the mild licorice flavor builds the longer you chew.

**The skinny:** 9 pieces = 140 calories and 1 gram of fat. \$4 for 8 ounces, [naturalvineslicorice.com](http://naturalvineslicorice.com)

*RJ's Natural Soft Eating Licorice*

F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal

**The goods:** The family-owned New Zealand company has seen its U.S. sales grow an average of 15% annually over the last four years.

**Tasting notes:** Tender, tangy, earthy and intense.

**The skinny:** 3 pieces = 140 calories and 1 gram of fat. \$8 for 10.6 ounces, [chefshop.com](http://chefshop.com)

*Gimbal's All-Natural Licorice Scotties*

F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal

**The goods:** Most licorice is made with wheat, but this company produces a gluten-free variety that's formed into cute Scottish Terrier shapes.

**Tasting notes:** Stickily chewy but bright and sweet with anise.

**The skinny:** 7 pieces = 100 calories and 0 grams of fat. \$26 for six 11.5 ounce bags, [candydirect.com](http://candydirect.com)