NIQ Perspectives

Food & Beverage

March 31, 2026

“Mother’s Day exposes a hard truth for the industry: consumers haven’t stopped spending—they’ve stopped tolerating anything that feels generic. Demand is concentrating around moments that deliver emotional certainty, rewarding brands and retailers that simplify choice and elevate meaning rather than chase volume. Those that align around clarity, curation, and experience will capture more predictable—and more durable—seasonal performance.”

Chris Costagli

Vice President, Thought Leadership F&B Insights Lead, NielsenIQ

Did you know…

- When it comes to gifting goals for Mother’s Day, Asian households are **2.6x more likely** to prioritize healthier or better-for options?[3]
- When deciding what to gift for Mother’s Day, lower income households are **1.2x more likely** to choose gift cards or cash while upper income households are **1.4x more likely** to choose something experiential?[3]
- Those who live in the US but were not born in the US are **1.8x more likely** to gift specialty coffee or tea for Mother’s Day?[3]

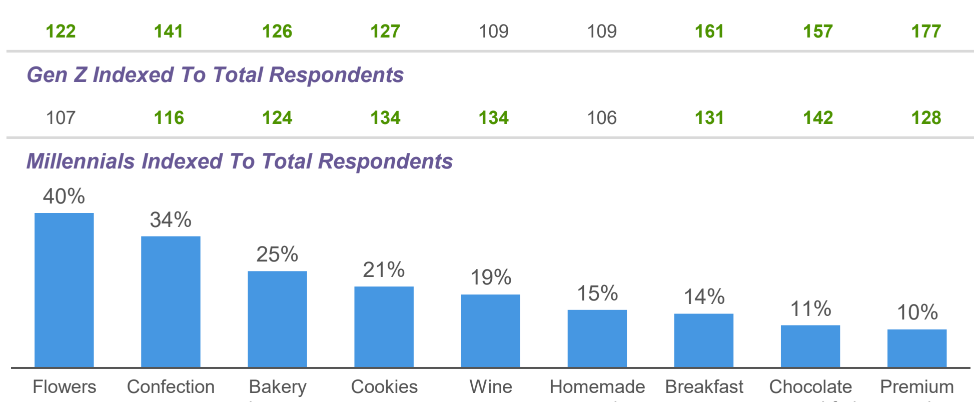
Mother’s Day And The Economics Of Emotion

Implications for confectionery manufacturers

The gifts that never miss

Traditional gifts continue to dominate because they offer emotional certainty in an increasingly complex shopping environment. Flowers and chocolate anchor Mother’s Day by eliminating risk from the gifting decision and signaling care instantly. The growth opportunity isn’t new categories—it’s sharper, more intentional storytelling around familiar ones. Winning assortments reduce choice anxiety by making the “right” gift obvious.

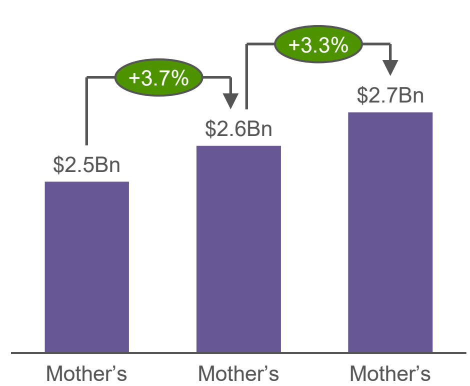
F&B ITEMS CONSUMERS TYPICALLY BUY FOR MOTHER’S DAY[3]



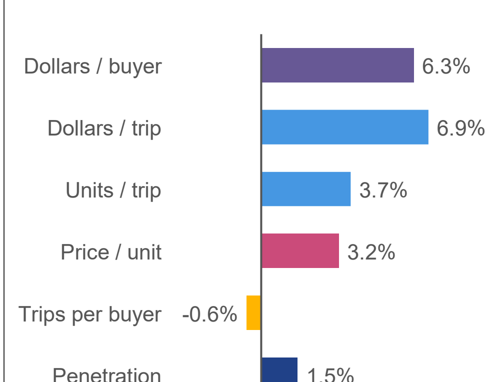
When spending still feels worth it

Mother’s Day confectionery is sustaining growth even as pricing pressure intensifies, underscoring the category’s durability. Increases in both penetration and spend per buyer point to broader participation rather than heavier reliance on a narrow shopper base. This is purposeful behavior: consumers are concentrating spend around moments that still feel meaningful, defensible, and worth the premium.

MOTHER’S DAY CONFECTIONERY SALES PERFORMANCE[1]



MOTHER’S DAY ‘25 CONFECTIONERY PURCHASE TRENDS[2]



Industry Analysis Sources: [1]NIQ, Retail Measurement Services, Total Full View, Mother’s Day 2023 4 w/e 05/24/2025; [2]NIQ, Expanded Omnishopper Panel On Demand, Total Store, Total US, 4 w/e 05/24/2025; [3]NIQ, BASES Quick Question Omnibus Survey, n=2,024, March 2026

Author: Chris Costagli, Vice President, Thought Leadership, Food & Beverage Insights Lead; Maria Camila Garnica, Industry Analyst

NielsenIQ

© 2026 Nielsen Consumer LLC. All Rights Reserved.

NIQ
Perspectives
Food & Beverage

The takeaway…

- Price sensitivity is being overstated; consumers are reallocating spend toward emotionally defensible occasions.
- Consumables are not structurally disadvantaged—only those that fail to deliver experiential value are at risk.
- Assortment simplification is emerging as a performance lever, not a trade-off, as confidence increasingly drives conversion.

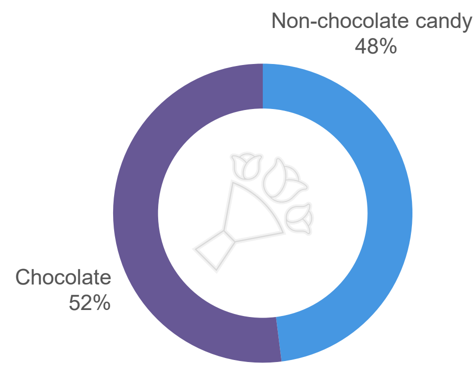
Your next move…

- Maintain premium shelf space, signage, and gift-forward merchandising for Mother's Day confectionery rather than over-promoting or collapsing price tiers—conversion will follow emotional clarity, not deeper discounts.
- Prioritize formats, bundles, or packaging that signal intention and occasion—making the product feel chosen, giftable, and memorable rather than transactional.
- Lead with fewer, clearer, emotionally coded choices—best sellers, premium anchors, and "can't-miss" gifts—rather than overwhelming shoppers with breadth.

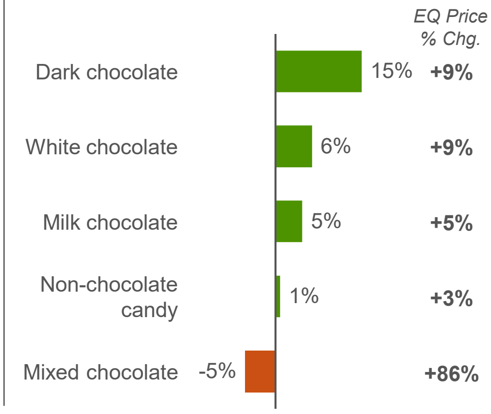
The gift you can't get wrong

Chocolate remains the emotional center of Mother's Day gifting because it delivers an immediate, universally understood signal of care, comfort, and celebration. As shoppers become more selective about where they spend, chocolate stays emotionally legible—a low-risk choice that feels personal, appropriate, and hard to get wrong. It should be merchandised as the emotional hero of the occasion, not treated as a secondary add-on.

CONFECTIONERY DOLLAR SHARE MOTHER'S DAY '25[1]



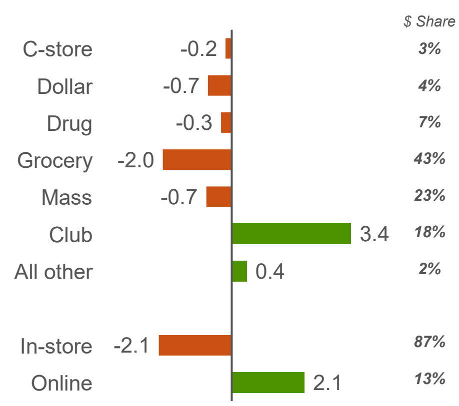
CONFECTIONERY DOLLAR GROWTH DURING MOTHER'S DAY '25 vs YA[1]



Club and ecommerce are redefining how premium is accessed

As 26% of shoppers increasingly buy value sizes and 54% actively seek promotions, club has emerged as the primary growth engine for dark chocolate—now holding 18% share and pulling shoppers away from grocery and mass. At the same time, online is redefining how gifting decisions are made, unlocking curated gift guides, AI-driven recommendations, and influencer-led discovery that simplify choice for younger shoppers.

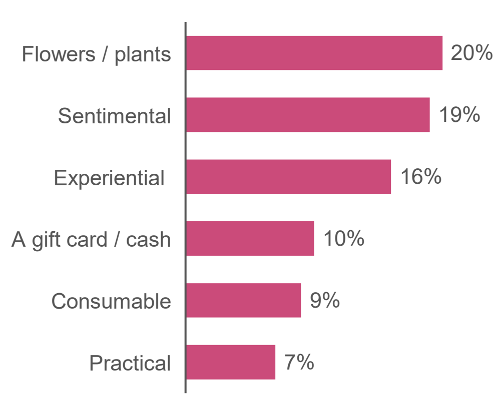
DARK CHOCOLATE DOLLAR SHARE CHANGE DURING MOTHER'S DAY '25[2]



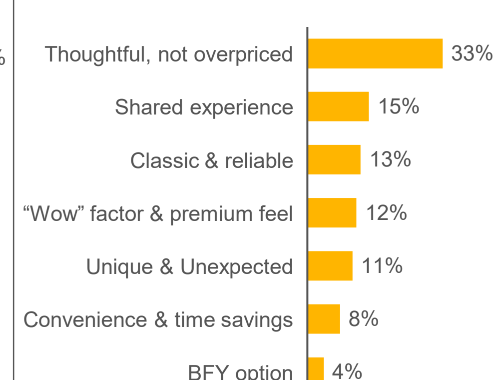
Gifting that earns its place

Mother's Day reveals a clear hierarchy in gifting: sentiment and experience lead, but familiarity still earns trust. Consumers want gifts that feel emotionally rich and premium, without crossing into extravagance. Confectionery only wins when it behaves less like a product and more like a moment—something that feels chosen, shared, and remembered. Lean into experience, not just indulgence, to stay relevant as gifting expectations evolve.

PERCEPTIONS OF A "REAL" MOTHER'S DAY '26 GIFT[3]



LEADING GOALS WHEN BUYING F&B FOR MOTHER'S DAY '26[3]



Looking for more?

Mother's Day 2026 will reinforce a clear pattern: consumers are concentrating discretionary spend around moments that feel emotionally justified. Familiar, premium-leaning gifts will continue to win when they are framed as thoughtful gestures rather than commodities. Retailers should expect higher conversion where assortments are simplified and emotionally coded. Manufacturers should expect stronger performance from products that lean into experience, presentation, and meaning.

NielsenIQ

© 2026 Nielsen Consumer LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Industry Analysis Sources: [1]NIQ, Retail Measurement Services, Total Full View, Mother's Day 2023 4 w/e 05/24/2025; [2]NIQ, Expanded Omnishopper Panel On Demand, Total Store, Total US, 4 w/e 05/24/2025; [3]NIQ, BASES Quick Question Omnibus Survey, n=2,024, March 2026

Author: Chris Costagli, Vice President, Thought Leadership, Food & Beverage Insights Lead; Maria Camila Garnica, Industry Analyst