

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Balenciaga causes controversy with latest snack-themed stunt

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*Balenciaga's latest food-themed clutch is solicited strong reaction from consumers. Image credit: Lay's/Balenciaga*

By AMIAH TAYLOR

French fashion house Balenciaga is catching heat for turning an American pantry staple into a runway-worthy clutch.

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The Lay's x Balenciaga leather chip bag is a novel collaboration between the French maison and the PepsiCo-owned snack manufacturer. The handheld clutch is a replica of a bag of branded chips, constructed of leather and featuring a metallic top zipper.

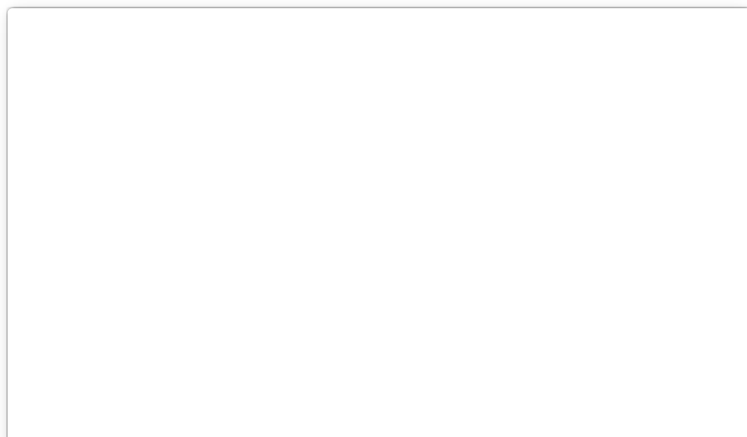
"Remember the trouble that Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, got in when he put Yeezy Gap hoodies in construction bags on the sales floor?" said Pam Danziger, president at **Unity Marketing**, Stevens.

"This made-over Lay's potato chip bag from Balenciaga looks like it might be headed for similar social media scorn," she said. "If you are carrying around a potato chip bag, at least it should have potato chips in it as a reward."

Finger lickin' fashion

Balenciaga's snack-themed handbags first appeared in the public eye during this year's Paris Fashion Week.

The brand's spring/summer 2023 show, which was opened by rapper Kanye West, took place on Oct. 2.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Lay's (@lays)

*Rapper Kanye West made his runway debut at Balenciaga's mud-filled runway show*

The fashion show made headlines for its unconventional setting: a mud-filled Paris show space complete with a dirt-splattered runway. A few models clutched the Lay's x Balenciaga leather chip bags tightly in crumpled bow shapes.

Balenciaga creative director and Georgian designer Demna Gvasalia was the subject of a fan-fueled Instagram post that invited the account's 253,000 followers in for a closer look at some of his kitschy creations.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Balenciaga by Demna (@demnagram)

*The post shows three variations of the handbag that played on a trio of classic Lay's chip flavors: original, "flamin' hot" and "limn."*

Mr. Gvasalia is known for his subversive releases which thwart the general expectations of the fashion industry.

At the helm of Balenciaga, he has delivered several collaborations with Crocs a brand that creates rubber utility shoes that are known for being dually comfortable and unfashionable released grocery-store-inspired bags for hundreds of dollars and even debuted a leather trash bag that retailed for \$1,790.

Balenciaga is a headline mainstay in the fashion industry because, as a label, it has branded itself as a risk taker. The edgier its designs become, the more free publicity the French fashion house receives, which in turn converts to direct sales.

An apt example of this press-to-purchase pipeline are the limited-edition, destroyed white Paris sneakers from

Balenciaga. Worn by celebrity rapper Lil Uzi Vert and released to avoid fanfare, the sneakers received mass pushback for already appearing pre-worn, dirty and tattered despite retailing for \$1,850.

Irrespective of the massive internet criticism, the hole-filled shoes sold out and are now retailing on the resale market for up to \$3,000, *Grailed* reports.

If the past is any indicator of the French fashion house's sale success, the Lay's x Balenciaga leather chip bag will likely be the clamored-after star of the spring/summer 2023 show upon its official release. The snack-themed clutch will reportedly be sold for \$1,850.

Fashion with a yum-factor

While Balenciaga pulled inspiration from potatoes, peer entities are sourcing alternative creative direction from other edibles.

American luxury brand Judith Leiber and singer Katy Perry collaborated on the release of a new mushroom-inspired novelty evening bag in August ([see story](#)).

The \$6,195 purse comes from a long line of food-inspired handbags from the brand, including a Swarovski-crystal embellished rendition of a hamburger and fries.

Beyond reinventing popular food items as wearable accessories, French fashion house Balenciaga is collaborating with circular technology platform Reflaunt and inviting consumers to sell their previously worn apparel and accessories from the house. The new service allows previous buyers to resell Balenciaga ready-to-wear, shoes, bags, accessories and small leather goods from the French maison ([see story](#)).

"Conceptually, I like the clutch, it's a gender-neutral concept and Balenciaga is known for pushing the boundaries," Ms. Danziger said.

"So this might just be a hit if for nothing else than its novelty factor," she said. "But Balenciaga may have pushed the boundaries too far by striking a partnership with a grocery store, consumer packaged goods brand like Lay's."