

Standing out in the crowd

WHO COULD HAVE PREDICTED THAT LEGGINGS would once again be fashionable? Or that Beanie Babies would make a comeback? Trends can be difficult to predict. But after years of closely studying the beverage industry, experts offer their findings on the newest beverage-related trends.

NATURAL EXPANSION

In recent years, coconut water has increased in popularity, says Sarah Theodore, global drinks analyst at Mintel Food & Drink, Chicago. According to the Briefing Series report by Innova Market Insights, Duiven, The Netherlands, the three main coconut water brands in the U.S. market in 2009 were Zico, O.N.E. and Vita Coco. This year, PepsiCo is expanding its Naked Juice line of coconut waters with new flavors Lychee, Mango Peach and Pineapple.

In addition to being used as a main ingredient in beverages, coconut water also is being used as a supplemental ingredient.

"I think one of the really interesting things about coconut water is that it wasn't just used as a standalone product, but it was used as an ingredient in other things," Theodore explains. "[For example,] a juice product with coconut water, which was used to reduce the calorie content."

Likewise, aloe juice products are making an appearance alone and in other beverages, she says. Recently, Outernational Brands, Albertson, N.Y., introduced Vivaloe juice, which contains whole pieces of the aloe vera plant, aloe vera juice, honey and cane juice. Gourmetti Brands, Aventura, Fla., launched a ready-to-drink tea called Chantea Green Tea & Aloe Vera. The company notes that aloe vera functions to support the digestive system, boost

immune function and increase the absorption of vitamins C and E.

Although aloe vera is a primary ingredient in these beverages, it's used as a supplemental ingredient in others. For instance, Bacardi U.S.A., Coral Gables, Fla., launched Bacardi Torched Cherry, made with Barbados cherry and torched plant aloe.

WELLNESS LIVES ON

The fact that consumers are looking for better-for-you products is nothing new. However, the way in which beverage-makers are adapting to their needs is something to talk about.

"If you think of carbonated soft drinks, juice and ready-to-drink teas, those categories really are still grappling with this big issue of sugar and calorie content," Mintel's Theodore says. "We're seeing a lot of innovation around how to solve this problem and it's really coming from a couple different directions, which is unique this year. Instead of just coming up with diet products, we're seeing a few different types of solutions."

The first solution is low- to mid-calorie beverages. Earlier this year, Dr Pepper Snapple Group introduced Dr Pepper Ten, a 10-calorie beverage aimed at men who are not satisfied with the taste or image of diet soft drinks. The low-calorie beverage uses a blend of sweeteners to mimic the taste of regular Dr Pepper, the company says.

Up-and-coming beverage trends



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