

BEV NEXT

Ahhhhh Frescas!

A Latin American treat comes north of the border

Cañita Aguas Frescas, a lightly flavored, all-natural drink, offers consumers the authentic flavors and aromas of traditional Latino refreshment without going south of the border. Although developed by Eat Inc., a Chapel Hill, NC-based company, Hispanic consumers shouldn't be concerned about the beverage's north of the Rio Grande origins. Jorge Goldsmit, CEO of Eat Inc., was born and raised in Mexico City and knows about authentic aguas frescas. With a childhood spent drinking the slightly sweet beverage—which is a tradition in Latin American homes—Goldsmit is relying on his mother's traditional recipe for the product.

"This is a type of drink that's very popular in Mexico and Central America. It's a mixture of fruit juice, water and sugar," he explains.

With a slogan that reads "The best of there, here" in Spanish, Cañita Aguas Frescas attempts to evoke childhood memories and cultural familiarity among Hispanics living in the United States.

"This is liquid nostalgia," he declares. "I went to a lot of stores (in the US) and did research and realized that Hispanics are paying a premium for products made in Mexico, and the biggest reason people buy them is because it reminds them of home."

When Goldsmit moved to the US in 1998, he was surprised when he couldn't find authentic aguas frescas drinks in stores or Mexican restaurants, especially considering the 32 million Hispanics living in the US.

While attending Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina, Goldsmit came up with a business plan to launch a traditional Latin American drink as part of a "new venture" project. Using that business plan, Goldsmit launched Cañita Aguas Frescas this year in convenience and "mom and pop" stores throughout North Carolina and the Atlanta area.

The product's name, Cañita, means "stick" or "reed" in Spanish, but Goldsmit explains that it's not meant to describe the product. Hispanic friends liked the name because it was catchy.

Two flavors—Tamarindo and Jamaica—give consumers a taste of traditional Latino culture. Tamarindo is made with

tamarind fruit, water and sugar and has a sweet, tangy taste. The Jamaica flavor contains hibiscus flower petals, which grow naturally in Latin America and are renowned for their deep scarlet hue. Cañita Aguas Frescas, available in 20-ounce bottles, contains no preservatives, artificial flavors or colors.

"We're using real tamarind pulp and hibiscus flowers, not extract or flavor," he says.

Goldsmit said one of the challenges of launching an "ethnic" beverage is convincing consumers and retailers of its authenticity despite its origins in the United States.

"I have to communicate that the product is made by someone who knows what aguas frescas is about. Once people try it, there's no question that it's authentic," he states. "Everything on the bottle says Mexico—the type, coloring, the graphics and the even the language, which is primarily Spanish."

Eat Inc. is not the first beverage company to develop authentic Latin American aguas frescas products in the US. In 2002, Nestlé's Kerns launched an Aguas Frescas line in California and Arizona with Horchata, Tamarindo and Fresa flavors. PepsiCo also test marketed Dole Aguas Frescas in mango and

tamarind flavors. Mott's Clamato also has four Las Fuentes Aguas Frescas flavors.

Latinos are the fastest growing demographic and the largest ethnic minority in the US and they spent \$800 billion on goods and services last year.

Although Hispanics are the primary target market for aguas frescas beverages, Goldsmit contends his product also appeals to consumers with all-natural preferences.

Goldsmit says he promotes Cañita primarily through cultural festivals and Hispanic-oriented community events in North Carolina and Atlanta. He plans to expand distribution in the Southeast market before heading west and north. —Heather Todd



Cañita Aguas Frescas is currently available in North Carolina and Atlanta.

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