

Coca-Cola Unveils 90-Calorie Mini Can

Coca-Cola has introduced a 90-calorie mini can to give consumers a convenient way to manage their caloric intake. The 7.5-fl.oz. can carries the distinct Coca-Cola contour-shaped bottle image in white on the brand's classic red background. It will debut in December in Washington and New York City. The rollout will expand to the rest of the country by March 2010.

Other brands will be offered in the new mini can, including Sprite, Fanta Orange, Cherry Coca-Cola and Barq's Root Beer.

The package introduction comes in the wake of a recent global commitment from Coca-Cola to put front-of-package calorie information on nearly all its products. The beverage giant also announced a new partnership with the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation, which advocates a common-sense approach to helping reduce obesity by 2015. A core objective of the group is to remind consumers that achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is about balancing the calories consumed in a sensible diet with calories expended through physical activity.



Pepsi, Ocean Spray Expand Alliance To Broaden Single-Serve Juice Offerings

Pepsi-Cola North America Beverages and Ocean Spray (Lakeville, MA) have expanded a long-term U.S. sales and distribution agreement to include a broader array of single-serve juices and juice drinks.

PCNAB, a unit of PepsiCo Inc., and the agricultural cooperative teamed up in 2006 to bring Ocean Spray's single-serve cranberry juice products to Pepsi bottlers. Beginning in February, PCNAB will produce, distribute and market, under license from Ocean Spray, several more flavors of Ocean Spray beverages. The expanded lineup will include 15.2-fl.oz. 100% apple, orange, ruby red grapefruit, pineapple peach mango, strawberry kiwi and blueberry juice cocktail.

20%

That's how much salt Conagra Foods Inc. has pledged to reduce in its products by 2015. The food giant launched its reduced-sodium Healthy Choice frozen meal line two decades ago, and its chefs and scientists have worked since 2006 to reduce salt in other brands, including Orville Redenbacher's popcorn and Chef Boyardee pasta. So far, its initiatives have reportedly resulted in 2 million fewer pounds of salt a year in the domestic food supply. ConAgra's latest pledge, impacting 20 brands and 160 product varieties, removes another 8 million pounds.



5 New Chocolate Candies From Mars

Mars Snackfood US is adding five chocolate candy items to its permanent offering over the next several months, including three previous limited-edition varieties. M&M's Wildly Cherry Chocolate Candies, which adds a rich cherry flavor to the brand's signature chocolate, and M&M's Coconut Chocolate Candies, which capture the signature appeal of the bite-size chocolates in a coconut-flavored blend with green, brown and white crunchy candy shells, become regular Mars items in December after limited runs earlier this year. Twix Java Chocolate Cookie Bars move from a 2008 limited edition to a standard offering in April 2010. It is formulated with coffee-flavored caramel and paired with a chocolate cookie covered in chocolate.

Two candies will make their debut in January, including 3 Musketeers Truffle Crisp Bars, with only 170 calories and featuring a chocolate truffle on a crisp layer enrobed in real milk chocolate. Milky Way Simply Caramel Bar boasts a rich, creamy caramel center surrounded by milk chocolate.

Separately, Mars said its M&M's Peanut Butter Chocolate Candies, with a peanut butter creme center surrounded by chocolate and a colorful candy shell, is now available in a larger "tear 'n share" size.

Energy-Enhanced Meat Snack

Power Hungry Foods (Sartell, MN) is targeting vending as a prime retail channel for its new Lightning Rods Energy Beef Stick. An alternative to energy drinks, shots and bars, the protein-rich meat snack combines guarana, natural caffeine and ginseng to boost energy, athletic performance and overall health. Lightning Rods are gluten-free and are free of trans fat. The 27g. beef sticks come in an 84-ct. case, with a choice of two 42-ct. cartons or four 21-ct. cartons. PHF said it is investing in heavy TV promotion beginning this month that coincides with the fall and winter sports season. A one-minute infomercial will be aired nationally on all major networks to educate consumers about the unique benefits of Lightning Rods. Visit powerhungryfoods.com.

Blue Sky Free Truvia-Sweetened Soda

Hansen Beverage Co. (New York City) has launched the Blue Sky Free line of 100% all-natural sodas. It is offered in five all-natural flavors: root beer, cola, ginger ale, lemon lime and cherry vanilla creme. The drinks are naturally sweetened with Truvia, an all-natural sweetener extracted from the Stevia plant. They have no calories and are free of caffeine, preservatives and artificial ingredients. Hansen's extensive beverage lineup includes Monster Energy and Java Monster energy drinks. Go to hansens.com.

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