

HOT SPOT

By Art Snyder

Your rink is synonymous with fun and fitness, and as 2009 shakes out, you're in luck on both counts. Your snack, vending and other foodservice areas will see a profit picture that almost glows, thanks to a wealth of new products and strong advertising efforts from Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Kraft Nabisco and Kellogg's, among others.

Coke and Pepsi sales hopes

The beverage giants of the day, Coke and Pepsi, acknowledge that their longtime leadership with carbonated brands has fallen on slowpoke times. According to *Beverage Digest*, U.S. soda sales overall have declined 3.5 percent this year alone. All things considered, that's a substantial figure. Neither giant is sitting still, however, and some new strategies are emerging. Coca-Cola Bottling Co. Consolidated, for example, has launched a consumer test (in Virginia) to see what bottle sizes drinkers prefer. Similarly, the trade magazine said that Pepsi Bottling Group Inc., the

largest bottler of Pepsi brands, is testing (in a few markets) serving sizes of Pepsi beverages. These steps may impact your vending and foodservice mix and overall volume, and you can look here in the months ahead for any signals from the companies. (Other news from them is below.)

TummyTicklers

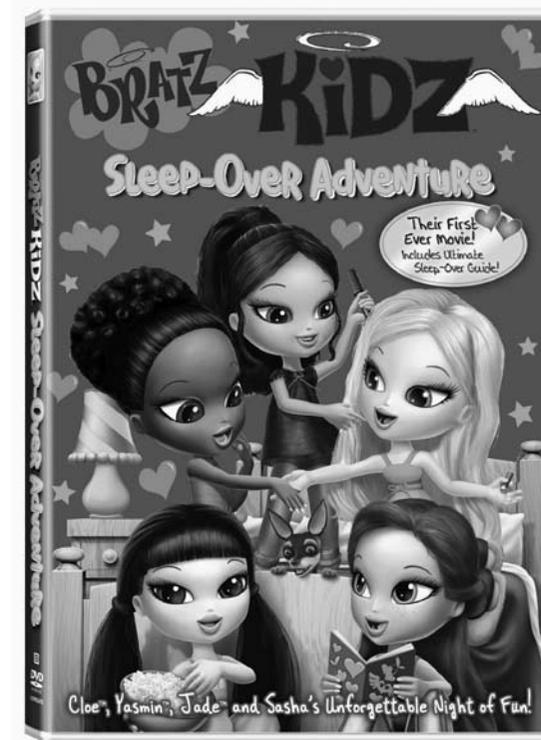
Your daycare and family offerings sometimes get overlooked in the rush of ideas and products for your rink, but you can look to the new 4-ounce line of toddlers' beverages from TummyTickler. The packaging is bright and eye-catch-



ing, and the single-serve drinks have a welcome spill-proof valve and an easy-grip design for little hands. The beverage itself is 100 percent apple juice, sure to be a hit with young ones and parents alike. Stock TummyTickler beverages if you have a predicted demand from your customers. And be sure to announce the beverage to churches and other groups that might have young ones included in any private skate. For more, call (877) 875-8443, ext. 2022, and visit www.inzonebrands.com.

Bratz popularity

As reported here several years ago, the iconic girl brand Barbie has a competitor that's lived up to its hype: Bratz. The Bratz collection of dolls has seen the target consumer, under-12 girls, generate allegiance to Bratz collectibles, and you can put that to good



advantage at your rink. No more "Barbies-only" as prizes, redemption fare, and branded and licensed merchandise at your rink birthday and school sessions and elsewhere. Look for appropriate Bratz merchandise for school and holiday sessions this winter.

Kraft Nabisco new snacks

Kraft Nabisco snacks and convenience foods serve the appetites of rink customers everywhere, and new items from them deserve your attention. Some that are especially worthy: Corn-

in two varieties, Original Crème and Strawberry Crème, that are among the top-rated sweet snacks in convenience stores. Also making the grade as green-light rink fare from parent corporation Kraft are chewy Planters Nuts Snack Bars and Planters BIG Nuts Snack Bars (about a third larger than the regular bar), in various combinations of roasted peanuts, almonds and cashews. Finally, Kraft Natural Cheese Sticks, which can be retailed in their own self-displaying caddies, are getting a big marketing push; the four flavors of this handy, nutritious snack are String, Twists, Mild Cheddar and Jalapeño. Be sure you're up to speed this winter with Kraft Nabisco, throughout your rink.

Coke takes on Monster

The Coca-Cola Co. has agreed to distribute Hansen's Monster Energy line in select markets of the United States. This partnership complements the Monster Energy distribution agreement for other U.S. regions that Hansen's has with Anheuser-Busch Inc., as well as other distribution channels. At rinks across the country, you can expect a big uptick in Monster Energy advertising and demand, to go with local Coca-Cola distribution partners. Check your area Coca-Cola supplier for promotional materials, signage and discounts for Monster Energy. A Monster session featuring Freddy Krueger, Frankenstein, the Incredible Hulk and other "scare-actors" and a 2-for-1 Monster beverage special should do well.

News from Kellogg's

Like Kraft Nabisco, Kellogg's is a major foodservice player, and they recently introduced Rice Krispies Treats® Strawberry. This brightly colored, crunchy variety of the original (and popular) Rice Krispies Treats®

nuts with Limón seasoning, which are proving popular with Hispanic consumers; Newtons Fruit Crisps, a snack that offers a genuine fruit taste — Apple Cinnamon and Mixed Berry varieties are now available nationwide — that's



delicious and crispy; Oreo Snack Cakes, which marry the top-selling Oreo cookie taste with a new shape (early sales results are very brisk); Nilla Cakesters,

is made of crisp marshmallow squares that include strawberry-flavored pieces. Rice Krispies Treats® Strawberry are available in 20-count trays of 1.3-ounce

Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola in the spotlight



squares, and the snack should be available in all regions in 2009, so put this youth-approved snack on your rink menu right away.

Further, thanks to popular demand, the Keebler® Fudge Shoppe® Chocolate Fudge Brownie, also from Kellogg, has been brought out of retirement. This dense, 3-ounce brownie has been reformulated for today's consumer, and it's available at retail in a 12-count display tray. Rink customers should go for this item during almost any session, but especially during school and weekend events, so be prepared. Maybe a Fudge Shoppe® Chocolate Fudge Brownie birthday party option would be a hit, so think about that variant to boost birthday business.

Hollywood happenings

The movie world continues to do good things — making hit movies — so look for tie-ins and licensed products for drawings, school sessions, fundraisers and redemption-area duty in the months ahead for recent releases, such as *Bolt* and *Madagascar 2*, as well as *High School Musical* (any version), *Kung Fu Panda*, *Horton Hears a Who!*, *Chronicles of Narnia*, *Wall-E*, *Indiana Jones*, *The Dark Knight* (which has surpassed the \$1 billion mark at the box office) and *Harry Potter*, *Shrek* and *The Simpsons* (again, any versions), of course. Themed ses-

sions that key on most of these film franchises look to be winners. And in the future, work out some couponing deals with area theaters featuring any sequels of these films.

Pepsi Jazz

Pepsi has introduced Pepsi Jazz to most markets by now (it made its debut in 2006), so see what your beverage



supplier can do for you to spotlight the newest zero-calorie cola. It's offered in several formulations, such as Pepsi Jazz Caramel Cream, Black Cherry French

Vanilla, and Strawberries & Cream, and its eye-catching graphics should spur sales.

Coca-Cola Slap

The Coca-Cola system will distribute Brain-Twist's Slap energy drinks in the Great Plains, not to mention the company's own energy brands or ones that the company distributes through licensing partnerships. If your rink (or rinks) is (are) located in that flat heartland, ask your Coca-Cola supplier to help you feature Slap in 2009.

Coca-Cola Del Valle

Jugos del Valle is a manufacturer of non-carbonated beverages in Latin America that Coca-Cola acquired in 2006. With that company's admirable U.S. distribution network, Jugos del Valle beverages should be an option for your rink in 2009, wherever you are. Jugos del Valle is an especially strong brand in Hispanic markets, so if you have a sizable Hispanic customer base, Jugos del Valle beverages should see an appreciative response. Look for the company's new line of fruit nectars, which are in mango, peach and several other flavors. Remember, too, that fruit juices and fruit-flavored carbonated and other beverages are a top draw with the typical Hispanic consumer.



Milk should see enviable growth in demand from its target demographic — consumers like today's avid, active rink customer. Muscle Milk comes in vanilla, chocolate, strawberry and other flavors, and it defines itself as a healthy protein beverage for those who exercise and want a drink tailored for fast recovery and healthy energy. Fun and fitness, all in a gulp!

Honest Tea iced tea

The new president is a fan of Honest Tea, and that preference of Barack Obama might help your rink in the months ahead (especially if his approval ratings stay high). If you have a sizable community population that supported his election last November, consider stocking Honest Tea this year. The company is pleased with the president's preference for Honest Tea, so it's likely they might have promotional materials that you could use to feature the beverage. "We'd love for it to be the official drink of the new administration," according to Honest Tea CEO Seth Goldman.

Mountain Dew Voltage

Mountain Dew is a premier beverage with the under-25 male population, so keep that in mind, naturally, as you do your 2009 planning. Better still, Mountain Dew has just brought to market its latest flavor extension: Mountain Dew Voltage. It's "rippin'" with raspberry-citrus flavor and ginseng, along with the noted Dew caffeine kick, and teen boys especially will be demanding Mountain Dew Voltage. Call a supplier and stock Mountain Dew Voltage as soon as you can.

Frito-Lay goes nuts

Frito-Lay is synonymous with bagged snacks and salty-good taste, and the company — part of the Pepsi empire — sees natural nut snacks getting the marketing push in 2009. Frito-Lay has dubbed the nut line brand True North, and it'll be available from coast to coast in the months ahead. The company hopes to invigorate sales with catchy names that reflect a fun-loving, snack-time sensibility, as with Pistachio Crisps and Peanut Crunchers. Look for what Frito-Lay calls a "significant" advertising budget to spike up demand, and be ready with appropriate signage and sales specials in your rink foodservice areas. Yes, fun and fitness, all in a crunch!

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tein-enhanced "functional beverages" like milk. Pepsi is looking at rolling out Muscle Milk in early 2009, and with a solid advertising campaign, Muscle