

# HOT SPOT

By Art Snyder

When your rink is at its busiest — now — you know that's when you have to be on top of your game. Fortunately, the food industry and Hollywood alike have stepped up to deliver a wealth of rink-friendly fare that'll help you on your quest for success. Below, reviews of various Mars candy brands, Call of Duty, NOS and other energy drinks, and Star Wars developments are sure to please.

## In brief

From your foodservice and vending areas to your redemption, game and other profit centers, opportunity is knockin' this winter. A quick look at the news below should get your "wheels of imagination" spinning, to boost your bottom line. Many items can work with school, birthday and other private parties and sessions, along with occasional drawings and giveaways throughout the week. Take your cues, too, for the latest hot music for your sound system. Here's the roundup to help rinks everywhere:

Salty snack sales are up 25 percent in the past five years, and salty-sweet snacks and international flavors are major growth areas. Nuts, seeds and crackers are up a lot, and chips have shown 12 percent growth. Stock your rink accordingly.

Pepsi and the NFL, along with Kid Rock, Kelly Clarkson, Ice Cube, Wiz Khalifa and Travie McCoy are in a joint national promotion. Khalifa's Black and Yellow has become a monster anthem.

M&M's Snack Mix & Peanuts varieties and Peanut Butter & Jelly Sandwich Milk Chocolate Bar got top reviews at the 2012 Sweets & Snacks Expo.

Snack Factory's Pretzel Crisps line of tasty, healthier Original, Buffalo Wing, Jalapeño Jack and Chipotle Cheddar Pretzel Crisps flavors are available in 2-ounce bags.

Hispanics are the top ethnic group to consume thirst quenchers and sports drinks, followed by black consumers.

Asian and white consumers are lowest.

World of Warcraft cups and other licensed items for foodservice duty are showing standout appeal with the under-25 set.

Coca-Cola has ramped up its sports

connections, on the heels of the company's success with the 2012 Summer Olympics and a marketing campaign for 2013 that targets teens. This spells a win for PowerAde and other Coca-Cola brands. Be advised, especially with rink hockey activities.

The hottest big-screen, TV and video properties this winter and spring: Disney's Wreck-It Ralph; Super Mario Bros. 2; the Twilight franchise; anything Babar; the new Dr. Who series; Finding Nemo 3D; and anything Angry Birds Space.

New Müller FrütUp yogurt, from giant PepsiCo's Quaker division, is a healthy hit with teens and younger consumers (I'm no teen, but I love it, too).

## Mars candy news

Mars is showing its continuing commitment to sports activities with a partnership with the NFL and NASCAR and several top Mars brands: Snickers, M&M's, Dove Chocolate, Twix, Milky Way and 3 Musketeers. Note that professional football is the most popular sport among men, women and teens, and your rink can parlay that enthusiasm with sports, NFL and NASCAR action-themed promotions of the many Mars brands. Also, Mars is using its M&M's brand — via its Milk, Peanut and Pretzel varieties — to promote NASCAR events this year and beyond, not just seasonally, and that should jump your sales of Mars candy

brands, especially M&M's, month after month. NASCAR statistics that should enhance sales: NASCAR has more than 75 million fans; is the No. 2-rated regular-season sport on television; is the country's No. 1 spectator sport; and enjoys the high visibility of M&M's Racing Team. More good Mars news from the past year: Snickers sales have soared 21 percent, M&M's sales have climbed more than 9 percent, the Twix family has had a sales surge of 11 percent, and Dove Chocolate sales were up 5 percent. Altogether, this spells tremendous sales prospects for Mars candies, so talk with your supplier about special deals, discounts and new sports-themed signage to make sales pop this winter.

For seasonal appeal, Mars has developed new winter and Valentine's Day packaging for many of its iconic products, so look for these limited-time candies to accent overall rink sales. Many of these items should do well as part of birthday party packages and school sessions, too. Be sure to have

nationwide this winter and spring, with 1.5-ounce, single-serve bags priced at 89 cents. Should be a hit!

## Dove ice cream

Dove Ice Cream has introduced three new flavors that will roll out across the country this winter: Dove Unconditional Chocolate ice cream, made with chocolate ice cream, chunks of Dove dark chocolate, and a chocolate-like swirl; Dove Mint Chocolate Chunk ice cream; and Dove Vanilla Ice Cream with Chocolate Chunks, using milk chocolate. Get Dove to punch up sales in your freezer section, throughout the year.

## 'Call of Duty: Black Ops II'

Call of Duty remains all the rage, and the latest installment from parent Activision — Call of Duty: Black Ops 2 — shows every sign of continuing as a blockbuster game for rink customers ages 10 to 25, and maybe beyond that. The story has the United States under siege by its own combat drones. Play can be in the new Zombie Mode, as well as the traditional Survival game mode, with a third mode also making its debut, called Tranzit. Black Ops 2 is available in all major gaming formats, Xbox 360, Playstation 3, PC and Nintendo's Wii U. Look for any and all opportunities to put Call of Duty: Black Ops 2 and other Call of Duty games to work at your rink, from your redemption area to any licensed fare anywhere the fit is right at your rink. Snack and candy tie-ins should be especially promising.

## Call of Duty, M&Ms, Poptillas, Super Mario Bros. in the spotlight

your DJ announce these special candies from time to time. Your customers will



love it.

## Combos 7 Layer Dip Tortilla

Combos Baked Snacks are a big rink favorite, and the company has added a new flavor: 7 Layer Dip Tortilla. This variety combines cheddar cheese, sour cream, avocado, tomato, refried beans, onion and zesty jalapeño peppers. A national marketing campaign will include print advertising, digital media, radio, social media, a "7 Layer Party" public relations campaign, a Six Flags sponsorship, and in-store consumer outreach. Combos 7 Layer Dip Tortilla should be available

In doubt? Talk with your staff for profit-making rink ideas with Call of Duty: Black Ops 2.

## Poptillas

Snacks and skating go hand in hand, and now you have a new prospect: Poptillas, from San Francisco-based Classic Foods. Poptillas is a tortilla chip brand that has less fat, since the chips are popped, rather than fried, and only all-natural ingredients and whole grains are used. Poptillas are available in three flavors: boldly flavored original, with lightly salted yellow corn; spicy nacho cheese; and tangy salsa verde. If you're