Q&A: How Can Manufacturers Keep Up With Protein Beverage Trend?

Kari Imberg, Associate Editor, Food Manufacturing

Food Manufacturing recently interviewed Greg Paul, PhD, global Marketing director, nutrition & weight management, at DuPont Nutriton & Health on the latest trend that is emerging from the food industry: drinking like an athlete.

Q: Protein beverages are a growing market. How can manufacturers keep up with demands?

A: The demand for protein is going to continue to grow as brands highlight the value of protein. For example, soy protein, is versatile, functional and sustainable, therefore lending itself well to a variety of applications. With this growth into new applications, we've also seen the inclusion level of protein increasing. For example, a sports nutrition product in the past may have delivered 15-20 grams of protein, and with today's technology, products with 30 grams of protein per serving can be made. Manufacturers can keep up with increasing demand by pinpointing consumers' needs. Not everyone is looking for 30 grams of protein in a serving. In fact, it has been the smaller serving sizes with moderate amounts of protein (15 - 20 grams) that have bolstered the market these past few years. Knowing who your customer is and understanding what they want will help manufacturers stay relevant in the marketplace.

Q: What sets the nutritional beverage market apart from other growing industries?

A: Nutritional beverages are consumed as part of living a healthy lifestyle. They taste great and make you feel good about yourself. They are a healthy "indulgence," yet can replace a meal if you are in a time crunch or give you a recovery boost when consumed after a workout. Because nutritional beverages become a part of your lifestyle, like memberships to the gym and exercise classes, nutritional beverages perform well whether the economy is strong or suffering a decline. There are simply not a lot of industries that fall into this category.

Q: What's new in sports nutrition and how have the Millennials ushered this change?

A: The newest trend in sports nutrition are products targeting performance and recovery. Perhaps driven by the popularity of 'team' fitness programs like CrossFit and ToughMudder (both popular among Millennials). Combine this interest in fitness with the fact that six in ten Millennials believe they eat healthier than their parents, and it is not surprising that sports nutrition products have high appeal. In fact, the Sports Nutrition category has grown more than 10 percent in recent years with lines blurring between hard-core bodybuilders and athletes to more mainstream fitness enthusiasts who aspire to live a healthy lifestyle.

Q: Can you give some tips for food manufacturers on how to choose the best protein?

A: The protein concentration of the beverage and desired parameters like pH, viscosity, flavor and cost will determine which proteins to use. Food manufacturers also cannot overlook the interaction of protein with other ingredients like carbohydrates, fats, and vitamins and minerals. Furthermore, manufacturing conditions can also affect protein functionality. Clearly, selecting the right protein or typically, proteins, is complicated and that is why DuPont Nutrition & Health has experts across a wide variety of applications like bakery, bars, beverages, and dairy ingredients to assist manufacturers in selecting the right protein ingredients for their product.

Greg Paul, PhD, global marketing director, nutrition & weight management, at DuPont Nutrition & Health®

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