

Kraft Rolls Out New Tang Flavor

NEW YORK (AP) — Kraft Foods says it's rolling out the first new nationally distributed flavor of Tang in powdered form since the orange-flavored drink mix was introduced in 1959.

The addition of the orange pineapple flavor comes as powdered drink mixes have faded in popularity in recent years, hurt by the growth of bottled drink options and liquid flavor enhancers that aren't as messy. But Kraft is convinced there's demand for another Tang flavor given its loyal fan base over the years despite a lack of marketing support.

"There's such a following behind it, but it's niche," said Adam Butler, Kraft's director of powdered beverages. In particular, he said the drink is popular with Hispanics and Asians.

Other flavors such as grape have been distributed in certain swaths of the country, and flavors from overseas sometimes make their way back to the U.S. The company has also tested ready-to-drink boxes in the past. But Kraft says the orange pineapple mix that's hitting shelves now is the first flavor extension beyond the original orange flavor to be sold nationally.

Tang famously became associated with astronauts after it was brought along on space missions starting in 1965. But the brand hasn't been a focus for Kraft and the last time it was advertised on TV in the U.S. was 2003, according to the company. Today, the drink doesn't have a webpage and isn't even listed on Kraft's home page.

Still, Kraft has been looking for ways to squeeze more out of its stable of products since its split last year with Mondelez International, which took global snack brands such as Oreo that are expected to grow at a faster rate.

Kraft, which held onto North American grocery brands such as Oscar Mayer and Jell-O, has said it's focused on reviving the outdated image of some of its brands. Last year, for example, it gave its Kool-Aid mascot a makeover and new marketing campaign. The Tang push won't get the same support — there's no TV advertising planned.

As for the range of Tang flavors sold around the world — such as "pulpy mango" and "orange apple" — Mondelez retains the rights to the brand outside the United States and Canada.

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