

# Dr Pepper to Test Naturally Sweetened Sodas

CANDICE CHOI, AP Food Industry Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans are cutting back on both regular soda and diet soda. So Dr Pepper is testing something in between, with natural sweeteners.

[Dr Pepper Snapple Group](#) [1] said Wednesday that it plans to test versions of its Dr Pepper, 7Up and Canada Dry sodas this year that have about 60 calories a can with only naturally derived sweeteners. That's less than half the 150 calories in a can of regular Dr Pepper, but more than the 0 calories in the diet version.

The sodas would be sweetened sugar and stevia, rather than the artificial sweeteners used in traditional diet sodas or the high-fructose corn syrup used in most regular soda.

The beverage industry is trying to figure out ways to stop a years-long decline in U.S. soda consumption.

In particular, companies including Coca-Cola and PepsiCo are worried about a recent acceleration in the decline of diet sodas. Executives blame the pullback on people's concerns about artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame. More broadly, soda makers are trying to address an ongoing movement away from ingredients people feel aren't natural.

On Wednesday, Dr Pepper reported a quarterly decline in sales volume, but its profit beat expectations with the help of higher prices and cost improvements.

Dr Pepper declined to provide details about its upcoming test. But it would be just its latest attempt at tinkering with its soda.

In 2011, the company also introduced its "[Dr Pepper Ten](#)," [2] which it said had just enough high-fructose corn syrup to overcome the taste of the artificial sweeteners that some people don't like. Dr Pepper stressed that it would continue to focus on its Ten lineup in the year ahead, which also includes 7Up and Sunkist varieties.

In the meantime, Coca-Cola and PepsiCo are also looking at making versions of their flagship sodas that use natural sweeteners. But the bitter aftertaste of options such as stevia has been a roadblock. As a result, stevia is often used in conjunction with other sweeteners such as sugar to balance out the taste. Last year, Coca-Cola rolled out its "Coca-Cola Life" with those two sweeteners in Argentina.

Coca-Cola and PepsiCo have also tried mid-calorie drinks in the past, although they weren't made with natural sweeteners. In 2001, Coke rolled out "C2" and Pepsi in 2004 introduced its "Pepsi Edge." Both were taken off the market because of poor sales. PepsiCo gave the concept another try more recently with its "Pepsi Next," which is still on shelves.

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Published on Food Manufacturing (<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com>)

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Dr Pepper Snapple Group Inc. said it would work with select national retailers to test the sodas.

### **Source URL (retrieved on 04/27/2015 - 3:07pm):**

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