

'Exotic' Makeover: V8 Gets Trendy With Ingredient List

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Pricey fruit and vegetable juices have become fashionable among those on a quest for fitness, and now V8 is trying to grab their attention.

Campbell Soup Co. is hoping it can spark a turnaround for the struggling beverage brand by hitching it to the growing popularity of new brands that mix more exotic ingredients like coconut water, kale and ginger and tout their freshness. Whether the health and fitness crowd will swallow an older brand like V8 as part of their routines remains to be seen.

During Campbell's annual investor meeting Monday, Ed Carolan, president of the company's U.S. retail unit, noted that V8 has historically targeted "people who struggled to be healthy," or those who just wanted to get their daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

Now, however, he said V8 plans to target a group he called the "fit and hip explorers" — those who are genuinely enthusiastic about their health and well-being. Essentially, the idea is to position V8 as a more affordable way to get in on the juice habit, which can get expensive.

"We've been juicing for more than 80 years," Carolan said in explaining V8's potential to get in on the trend.

More expensive "premium" bottled juices, including PepsiCo's Naked juices, have grown in popularity and juice bars have been popping up in major U.S. cities. Starbucks also recently began selling bottles of Evolution Fresh juices in its cafes, with a bottle costing as much as \$6. The demand is being driven in part because "consumers are crazy for vegetables," Carolan said.

Juicing at home has become popular too, so much so that Bolthouse Farms, which was recently acquired by Campbell Soup, began selling big bags of carrots in supermarkets specifically for people who juice at home.

"This is a 10-pound bag, for those of you who don't juice or have horses," Jeff Dunn, president of the Bolthouse Farms unit, explained during the investor day.

Still, V8's image has been suffering. Sales are down 16 percent in just the past two years, according to Euromonitor International, a market researcher. Part of the problem is that people are increasingly gravitating toward foods they feel are fresh. And V8 juices, which are shelf stable and typically sold in the center aisles of supermarkets, don't exactly convey freshness.

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It's a weakness PepsiCo pounced on early last year with the introduction of its Farmstand fruit and vegetable drinks, which are sold in the refrigerated sections of supermarkets. That has taken a toll on V-Fusion, a center-aisle juice brand introduced in 2006 that mixes vegetables with fruits.

As for Campbell's plans for V8, the company plans to introduce new flavors early next year that come with names reminiscent of the popular premium juices on the market: "Healthy Greens," "Golden Goodness" and "Purple Power."

Campbell is also adding three flavors to its core line of vegetable juices — Spicy Mango, Sea Salt & Clam and Mint & Lime.

To capitalize on the protein craze, Campbell is also rolling out V8 protein bars and shakes this September. The shake will be made with a combination of dairy, soy, pea protein, brown rice and quinoa.

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