

Beverage trends in the UK

soft drink product update

Trend hunter Claire Phoenix tours the shows looking for new moves in the soft drink arena.

From lower sugar, English Garden fruit drinks to protein packed vegan formulations and more unusual ingredients such as CBD and apple cider vinegar, here is an update on British trends.

Juice-based frinks

What is happening in juice based drinks? Once highly sweetened and with a high water percentage many juice drinks are now aiming for a truly authentic taste with higher juice content and far less sugar or sweetener, with 'natural' being of utmost importance to consumers.

Using misshapen and bruised or damaged fruit is part of the new trend to reduce waste in every sector of consumers' lives. Available in cans and glass bottles, Flawsome, made with pressed fruit and sparkling water, reassures the customer clearly on its label that they have saved 2 sweet & sour apples or 3 oranges by using fruit that is not quite perfect.

Dash Water were among the first to use wonky fruits and its 0 calorie drink proudly announces that it is 'Made using British sparkling spring water infused with wonky lemons'.

In fruit-based drinks it is almost a given that they contain no sweeteners or preservatives or artificial colour or flavours, with provenance gaining in weight in terms of credentials. For example, the glass bottled Franklin & Son range includes a soft dusky pink cloudy apple juice made with Yorkshire rhubarb and cinnamon. This is packaged in retro style, embossed glass to remind consumers of the craftsman-produced artisan drinks of yesteryear.

Also in glass and once again with a historical presentation, The London Essence Company has produced a range of tonic waters including classic, bitter orange & elderflower and grapefruit & rosemary.

'Botanically brewed' is a phrase we will continue to see over the coming year. Fentimans Ginger Beer is a substantial seller now and car-



ries the tagline 'Crafted from the finest natural botanicals'.

Underlining the move to English garden fruits, Bottled Green Drinks now has offerings including 'Plump summer raspberry' and 'Rhubarb with a hint of ginger' in its sparkling presse range, still in the iconic conical glass bottles. While Mr Fitzpatrick's canned drink range includes premium Rhubarb and Rosehip presse with the label tagline 'flying the flag for great British drinks'.

The Cracker Drinks company has created a uniquely crafted fruit blend juice drink from blueberry and blackberry. Sold in a one litre carton with the tagline 'Zesty and refreshing' its aim is to offer premium products at affordable prices.

Consumers are prepared to pay more for defined health benefits. As an example, the Cleanse Prune Juice from Benefit Drinks clearly states on the front of its very plain, millennial-appelling pack, that it contains Vitamins A, C and E.

Lower sugar

Breckland Orchard has just introduced a zero sugar Strawberry & Rhubarb variant into its posh pop lighter range. Owner, Claire Martinsen, said that this was in response to retailer and consumer demand.

Well known juice manufacturer, Cawston Press has just introduced a 'No added sugar variant' to its mini cartons of Apple & Summer Berries – described on pack as 'Pressed Fruit shaken up with water'.

Tonic Waters

Tonic Waters in general have undergone a renaissance, with the London Essence Company highlighting the appreciation of botanicals, by having varieties such as bitter orange & elderflower and grapefruit & rosemary in its range.

Miss Mollie's: UK Tonic Waters include English cucumber, Marmalade and Pomegranate, grapefruit and red gooseberry blends. While its small batch mixers include variants reminiscent of an old fashioned sweet shop with Blackcur-



rant & Liquorice and Sour Bramley Apple. All sold in retro labelled bottles with crown cork seal.

Vegetarian formulations

Retailers continue to search for vegetarian and vegan options to satisfy the leanings of consumers.

Planted UK has released a completely natural oat drink with banana puree and no added refined sugar. Sold in 330ml cartons it states on pack that it is suitable for vegans and is dairy free, while containing vitamin D2 and B12. It can be stored at ambient temperatures but once opened needs to be consumed within 4 days.

Also appealing to vegans, Querkee is a plant based pea milk, that is a source of calcium, high in protein and vitamins and claims to have 90% less than dairy milk in carbon footprint terms.

Aiming at gym goers, Scitec Nutrition of Hungary is producing its Vegan Protein powder in hazelnut toffee flavour in a 450g container. The company also manufacture ready to drink protein smoothies in resealable HDPE with 25g protein per serving in mango passionfruit or blueberry raspberry flavours.

For the non-vegans, Pro2Go has released an on the go high protein drink, made using coffee beans. Sold in a resealable carton, it contains a substantial 30g protein.

Apple Cider vinegar

When it comes to new developments, we can expect to see more of ingredients like Apple Cider Vinegar, such as that produced by Herefordshire Farm company Willy's.

This trend to drinking fruit vinegars originated in the Far East, where it has been consumed for many years as a daily health dose. Willy's is meeting the trend towards kombucha tea-based drinks with a natural energy drink in a contemporary matt finish silver and eau de nil can, combining kombucha with 25mlACV (apple cider vinegar).



Cannabis

The cannabis industry is moving on apace and whereas some years ago many of us shrunk back in horror from the first cannabis or hemp based drinks, the trend is undoubtedly here to stay. The massive trend to CBD, Cannabidoil drinks, now including wine, beer, gin and soft drinks is evident, even in mainstream supermarkets such as Walmart Asda. Green Monkey CBD packaging in a clean white can with green logo contains both sugar and sweeteners. A legal and non psycho active extract of the cannabis plant with mixed fruit flavours, it contains less than 0.2% cannabis, in compliance with EU regulations.

Fruitful future

So there is plenty to consider here in drinks innovation, from the pure and natural to the environmentally formulated and the wild and wacky. We will continue to keep you informed of all that is new in the industry. ■

...whereas some years ago many of us shrunk back in horror from the first cannabis or hemp based drinks, the trend is undoubtedly here to stay.



Claire Phoenix is a freelance journalist and regular contributor to Soft Drinks International. www.clairephoenixmedia.com