

# Taking clean label to the next level

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Source: Ocean Spray Cranberries Inc., Blue Stripes Urban Cacao, PepsiCo Inc., Caribe Juice

CHICAGO — Nothing artificial, free of allergens and a short statement featuring recognizable ingredients are the attributes that have been the drivers of the clean label trend. But when it comes to beverages, clean is evolving to include the removal of characterizing, albeit sometimes undesirable, components, such as the alcohol in wine, the lactose in milk and even the sugar in juice. Clean label beverage innovation also is about using ingredients associated with cleaning the body and cleaning the planet and using technologies that assist with food safety and reduce food waste by lengthening shelf life while keeping preservatives out.

Springfield, Ill.-based Brandt, a global agronomic research and product development company, has partnered with Hello Beverages LLC, Chicago, a manufacturer of enhanced functional waters, to produce a new concept in beverage development. Together the companies will introduce hellowater defense, which is based on a new patented technology called CYTO Plus that supports immunity and toxin elimination.

The ingredient technology from Brandt accelerates the elimination of toxins from the body, according to the company. It appears on ingredient statements as: CYTO+ Technology (ammonium bicarbonate, riboflavin 5 phosphate and riboflavin). The beverage comes in 16-oz bottles with water as the first ingredient. It is sweetened with stevia and includes natural flavors, all for zero calories.

“We could have gone the typical route in creating an immunity beverage by adding core vitamins and minerals to help boost health, but we knew we needed to deliver a breakthrough product that had true protection,” said Tom Bushkie, co-founder and chief executive officer of Hello Beverages. “With this technology, we are taking ‘clean’ to a whole new level.”

Better Juice Ltd., Rehovot, Israel, developed patent-pending enzymatic technology to reduce the load of simple sugars in juice. It uses natural ingredients to convert monosaccharides and disaccharides (fructose, glucose and sucrose) into prebiotic and other non-digestible fibers and sugars, while preserving the flavor and inherent vitamins and other nutrients in the fruits, according to the company. In other words, the technology cleans up the carbohydrates in juice.

“This natural, non-fermentative process occurs without adding or removing ingredients,” said Eran Blachinsky, founder and CEO of Better Juice. “It also will not alter the flavor or aroma of the juice. While the process does slightly reduce the sweetness of the juice, it actually brings out more of the fruit flavor, making for a better-tasting juice product overall.”

Better Juice uses a solution that involves a pass-through step in the juice-making process, allowing the product to be marketed at a price point comparable to other premium juice products, the company said. The technology may reduce up to 80% of the inherent sugar in juice into non-digestible carbohydrates (prebiotic dietary fibers and other non-digestible molecules), cleaning up the nutrition label.

Enzymes are also behind the growing trend in removing lactose from dairy-based beverages. Processors are discovering that eliminating lactose — a disaccharide unique to all mammalian milk — from lattes, smoothies and other dairy-based beverages, may prevent consumers from switching to dairy alternatives when the sole reason for the swap is to avoid lactose.



Approximately 65% of the human population has a reduced ability to digest lactose, according to the National Institutes of Health. This is due to the lack of the enzyme lactase, which is responsible for breaking lactose down into the monosaccharides glucose and galactose. When lactose does not break down in the small intestine, it passes into the large intestine, where it may cause digestive issues.

Processors who add lactase to milk during processing break it down into glucose and galactose, which also happen to be sweeter than lactose. Thus, in sweetened products, added sugars may be reduced and still deliver the same sweet taste. This is another example of cleaning up the sugars.

New Good Moo'd from fairlife LLC, Chicago, a business unit of [The Coca-Cola Co.](#), Atlanta, is a line of lactose-free milks that also contains 25% less total sugars. Typical lactose-free milks made with lactase tend to be too sweet because of the sugar conversion. That's why the company first removes some of the lactose using ultra-filtration processing and then breaks down the remaining lactose, resulting in milk that tastes similar to its lactose-containing counterpart.

Another technology that assists beverage marketers with cleaning up labels is high-pressure processing (HPP), also known as cold pressure. The heat-free treatment makes it possible to preserve the flavor and nutrition of beverages longer without the need for chemical preservatives.

The HPP system involves the loading of airtight/hermetically sealed packages into carrier baskets. The baskets are inserted into the HPP vessel, which then gets sealed by plugs. At this point, potable water gets pumped into the vessel creating isostatic pressure (equal pressure on all sides) on the packages. Product is held at a high pressure for about six minutes, with pressures and times varying by product. The pressure disrupts the microbial biochemistry of pathogens and spoilage bacteria, which increases shelf life. It's commonly used by cold-pressed juice manufacturers to obtain about a 30-day refrigerated shelf life.

Caribe Juice, Alexandria, Va., for example, uses HPP for its new WTRMLN WTR functional blends based on naturally hydrating watermelon juice.

“Because watermelons are 92% water, watermelon juice hydrates like coconut water,” said Luis Solis, CEO. “And now we have elevated benefits powered by superfruit acerola juice and other functional ingredients, like sea salt, turmeric, cayenne, hibiscus, ginger juice and tart cherry that are 100% natural, not extracts, and mean a cleaner, more bio-available hydration and boost for your body.”

Part of the brand's clean label story is its sourcing of ingredients. Mr. Solis is committed to helping small local farmers and has created a vertically integrated farming and manufacturing supply chain for WTRMLN WTR in the United States and the Dominican Republic, his native country.

Upcycling is another emerging component of clean label. The use or reuse of food components that would otherwise be discarded positively impacts the planet. In other words, upcycling cleans up food waste streams.

Blue Stripes Urban Cacao, New York, uses the whole cacao fruit, utilizing its shell, fruit and beans. The company's line of cacao water is rich with antioxidants and electrolytes, according to the company. A sustainability focus is also a part of the packaging as the shelf-stable beverage is packaged in containers made from plastic recycled bottles.

“I want to bring the experience of walking on a cacao farm in Ecuador, taking the cacao pod off the tree, breaking it open and tasting fresh cacao fruit to the masses,” said Oded Brenner, founder. “The bottle is shaped like a cacao pod to serve as a metaphor for this experience.”

## **Less is more remains a priority**

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Simple and understandable ingredients are a commonality among many beverages positioned as clean label. Research from the Hartman Group, Bellevue, Wash., shows “inherently functional foods and drinks are typically seen as clean and closer to ‘whole food.’” This suggests ingredients used in clean label beverages be loaded with benefits and nutrition but minimize the number of ingredients on the label.

Ocean Spray Cranberries Inc., Lakeville-Middleboro, Mass., has introduced the B1U brand, a new beverage line featuring functional benefits, simple ingredients, easy-to-understand nutrition and recyclable packaging. The company is positioning the line as environmentally conscious enhanced waters, in other words, cleaned-up beverages. None of the four botanical-infused varieties contain any sugar or artificial sweeteners and rely only on natural ingredients for fuel, such as caffeine from black tea and minimally processed whey proteins.

Frutly hydrating juice waters, a new shelf-stable beverage from PepsiCo Inc., Purchase, NY, contain no added sugar or artificial sweeteners. As the name suggests, they are made with fruit juice and water, and then given a boost with vitamins and minerals.



“Recent research has shown parents are looking for healthier beverage options for their families; in fact, 56% of people leaving the category blame poor nutritional like sugar, calories and artificial sweeteners for pushing them away,” said Samantha Siegal, senior director of ambient juice marketing at PepsiCo. “And what’s more, very few — if any new

products — in the market check the boxes for both these needs from parents and teens. Frutly is the answer to this dilemma, delivering on parents' demands for hydration with no added sugar and no artificial sweeteners, and teens' cravings for delicious, refreshing taste.”

With the rise in low-carbohydrate dieting, sugar reduction and conversion is not enough for some carb counters. This is fueling innovation in bone broth beverages, with many marketers distinguishing their brands through ingredient selection and processing.

Beauty & The Broth, Los Angeles, is one such brand. Melissa Boloña, founder, discovered broth as the remedy to her longtime digestive issues. In addition to her stomach woes improving, Ms. Boloña began seeing benefits in her hair, skin and nails from the naturally occurring collagen that comes from the bones.

The subscription-based company offers beef and chicken bone broth concentrates made from scratch. They are simmered with vegetables and herbs. One 3-oz shelf-stable pouch is designed to be diluted with 12 oz of water.

Five Way Foods, New Bedford, Mass., makes natural broths that are sold refrigerated in 16-oz sipping jars. Five Way bone and vegetable broths are simmered to ensure all the proteins, collagen, vitamins and nutrients are extracted from the bones in order to maximize health-boosting qualities. The broths have a refrigerated shelf-life of 120 days, according to the company.

## **Cleaning up by drying out**

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To cope with the stress of the pandemic, many consumers have increased their alcohol consumption. Innovative beverage marketers are trying to help consumers by offering options with the alcohol removed.

“The sober curious movement is booming, and consumers are incorporating non-alcoholic drinks into the mix now more than ever,” said Chris Boyd, co-founder and CEO, Monday, San Diego. “We founded Monday to serve people an elevated adult beverage, free of alcohol and without the hangover.”

The company's first product is a non-alcoholic gin.

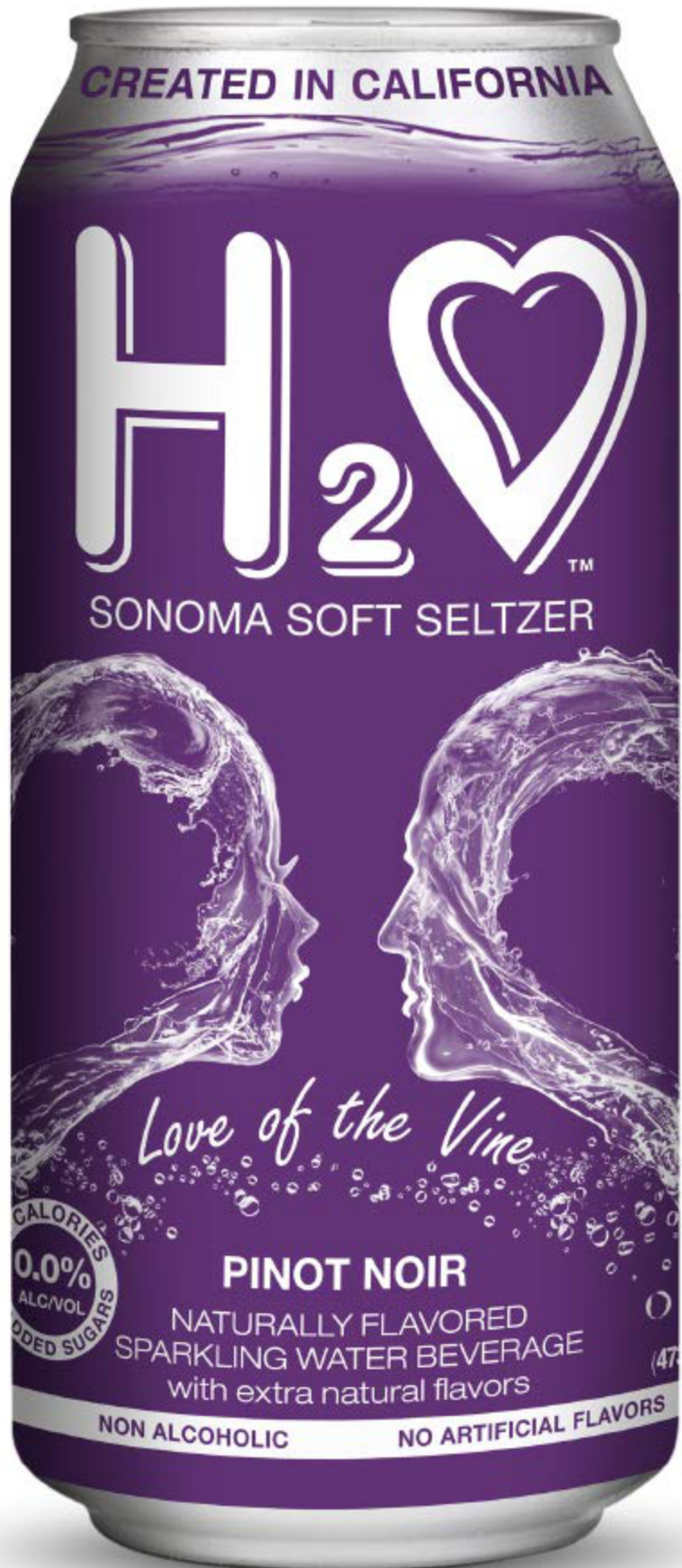
Sonoma, Calif.-based G-Zee Brands has launched H2O Sonoma Soft Seltzer, a wine-infused non-alcoholic sparkling water. The new category of alcohol-free lifestyle drinks combine the refreshment of sparkling water with the taste and spirit of California wines. The beverage is made with dealcoholized wine and natural flavor extracts. One 16-oz can contains 30 to 60 calories per serving, and also includes inherent nutrients from the grapes.

Optimist Drinks, Los Angeles, is introducing Optimist Botanicals, a collection of distilled botanical spirits made without alcohol, sugar, additives or artificial preservatives. The three distinct blends combine 10 to 15 botanical distillates sourced from sustainable farms.

“There has never been a more crucial time for optimism, and Optimist believes that people deserve the freedom to experiment with their drinking rituals and strengthen their social connections without compromising their physical and mental well-being,” said Lisa Farr Johnstone, who founded the company with her husband, Tommy.

Los Angeles-based AMASS is launching Riverine, a refined non-alcoholic spirit made with natural botanicals to deliver a complex flavor profile and finish.

“With our line of clean botanic spirits, we wanted to offer a premium culinary experience,” said Morgan McLachlan, co-founder. “Riverine is inspired by the dense coniferous forests of the Canadian Pacific Northwest. The result isn’t a gin proxy, but rather a nuanced, sophisticated spirit.”



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