

MIXING IT UP



CROSS-MERCHANDISING MIXERS WITH SPIRITS AND OTHER ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES can lead to an increase in sales and profits for both the alcoholic beverage and center store grocery departments, according to industry observers.

"People are investing in their home bars and spending \$60 on a bottle of bourbon or \$70 on a bottle of vodka, and still dumping cranberry juice and soda water into it," says Maria Littlefield, partner/president of Owl's Brew, a New York-based manufacturer of a line of non-alcoholic tea-based cocktail mixers. "Owl's Brew is that solution. We are a premium mixer that is fresh with new flavors. All of our blends are fresh-brewed, all-natural, essentially double-strength teas meant to be paired with spirits—vodka, bourbon, gin, tequila, even beer and wine."

Packaged in 8- and 32-ounce bottles, Owl's Brew is available in four varieties: Pink & Black, Darjeeling with a hint of hibiscus; The Classic, English Breakfast tea with lemon and lime; White and Vine, white tea with watermelon and tart pomegranate; and Coca-Lada, blend of black tea with coconut pieces, chai spices, pineapple juice and agave.

Pasta sauce maker Vino de Milo has gotten into the mixer category with its JB's Best Classic Bloody Mary Mix. "We take a very similar recipe to one of the market leaders, but we've cleaned it up with a natural version that uses local tomatoes, local horseradish, along with Tabasco and Lee & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce," says Jonathan Milo Leal, founder of the Athens, Ohio-based company.

Vino de Milo's Bloody Mary mix is packaged in quart wide-mouth spaghetti-sauce style jars. "We did that because McClure's, which is one of the leaders in Bloody Mary mix, has a similar jar, and we also found that people use more that way," Leal says. According to Leal, mixers are also great for cross-merchandising.

"In Kroger's Columbus (Ohio) Division we are being merchandised in the liquor department on an end cap with vodka," he says. "And in my local Kroger they put the McClure's Bloody Mary Mix above the olive bar. That makes sense because it is near stuff that consumers put in mixed drinks and it is utilizing previous unused space on the top of the counter."

Cross-merchandising can also do wonders in the frozen aisle, say officials with Old Orchard Brands, which manufactures a line of frozen juice concentrates that include Strawberry Daiquiri, Piña Colada and Margarita mixes.

"We're in the process of aligning with a leading liquor brand to pair with our new mixers on a promotion that will kick off in the fourth quarter," says Kevin Miller, vice president of marketing at Old Orchard Brands, based in Sparta, Mich.

