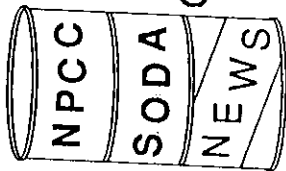


NPCC

CAN - O - GRAM

NATIONAL POP CAN COLLECTORS

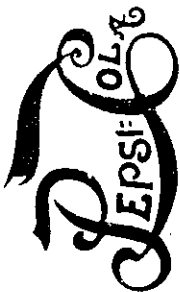


INTERNATIONAL



1898

MEMBERSHIP



1905

THEY'RE
BACK!
THE
COLA
WARS!



1906



1940



1950



1962



1976



1992

Date: NOVEMBER 91 Volume: 19

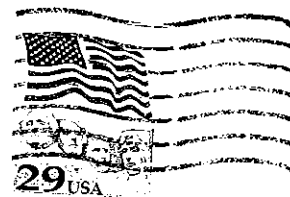
Issue: 3



NATIONAL POP CAN COLLECTORS

BOX 6666
Bill Swanson
14630 Garrett Ave., #613
Apple Valley, MN 55124

JRI



FIRST
CLASS

Gerald Pollack

294 Avenue B

Bayonne NJ 07002

CLASSIFIED ADS

NEW EDITOR

Dear NPCC members,

As you are already aware, the newsletter has gotten behind schedule. Dave Davis's new work schedule hasn't allowed him the time he wanted or needed to put the newsletter together. To get the newsletter back on schedule I stepped forward and offered to become the new editor. With your support (photos of new cans, news articles, comics) I should have the newsletter back on schedule in a short time.

All the positions for the NPCC are voluntary. I'd like to thank Dave Davis for the work and effort he did putting out the newsletter while dealing with a very time demanding job and having moved (more than once) over the last few months.

Sincerely,

Bill

My address is:

Bill Swanson
NPCC/CAN-O-GRAM
14530 Garnett Ave. #613
Apple Valley MN 55124 USA
phone (612) 891-3438

FOR SALE/TRADE: New Coke 1991-2 Disney 7 can sets, Camden Aquarium 9 can sets, Nicks '92 schedule, Diet Coke Great Gorge, many other east coast Coke cans. Will trade for other Coke or Pepsi special issue cans I need. Send your list! Barry Skokowski Jr., 7 Sprague Turn, Trenton NJ 08610

FOR SALE/TRADE: Coke Superbowi '92 cans reg.&diet. Coke NCAA Final Four '92 reg.&diet cans. I also have Stars brand cans (OR,COLA,RB&GR). I collect local cola brands & (all flavor special issue cans. Bill Swanson, 14630 Garrett Ave #613, Apple Valley MN 55124, USA.

WANTED: Trading partners from foreign countries to trade Coke & Pepsi commemorative cans. Have many east coast U.S. cans to offer in return. I'm also looking for 16oz Wello Yello wrestlers series. Will answer all. Barry Skokowski Jr., 7 Sprague Turn, Trenton NJ 08610

WANTED: Local area special issue commemorative cans- United States only. Will buy or trade. John C. Hantz, 6846 New Jersey, Hammond IN 46323-1962

WANTED: Sports cans (old&new) I also want store brand cola & root beer cans. I have to trade: the same plus many Coke & Pepsi commemoratives. Your trade list gets mine. Gelf Moore, 1322 Huffine Rd., Johnson City TN 37604

WANTED: Pepsi commemoratives. I have lots of cans foreign & domestic for trade. Debbie Rose, 3500 Beechgrove Rd., Merraine OH 45439

WANTED: From the second (355ml) Colorado Rockies set #5,7,14 & 15. Trade generously or pay top dollar. Ed Hallewas, Casper Fagellaan 3, 3051 HC Rottterdam, The Netherlands

C L A S S I F I E D A D S

All members are entitled to one free 50 word "FOR SALE OR TRADE" ad per month along with a free 50 word "WANTED" ad. Only pop/soda cans, sodabilla items, noncarbonated and juice beverages will be accepted. NO AD WILL APPEAR FOR MORE THAN THREE CONSECUTIVE MONTHS. Non-member ads will be accepted on a case by case basis upon the review and approval of the Director of the NPCC. Display ads are available at \$5 for a quarter page, \$9 for a half page, and \$15 for a full page. Display ads must conform to a 8.5 x 11 inch sheet of paper to be properly reduced to fit the newsletter format.

EVENTS CALENDAR

March 26-28, 1992 (Thursday-Saturday)
PEPSI-FEST '92
Sheraton Northeast, 7701 E 42nd St
Indianapolis, Indiana
Bob or Shari Stoddard, 714-593-8750

March 27-28, 1992 (Friday-Saturday)
THE INDY BEER & POP CAN SHOW
Indiana State Fairgrounds, Natural Resources Building
Indianapolis, Indiana
John Bundy, RR 2, Box 160, Noblesville, IN 46060

April 15-16, 1992 (Friday-Saturday)
SPRINGTIME IN ATLANTA
Holiday Inn Crown Plaza, Atlanta, Georgia
Lori Langlois, 404-961-6394


May 15-16, 1992 (Friday-Saturday)
BADGER SPRING PAUSE
Holiday Inn, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin
Jill Adams, 414-859-3059

July 22-26, 1992 (Wednesday-Saturday)
COCA-COLA COLLECTORS CLUB INTERNATIONAL
18TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
Orlando, Florida
Alice Fisher, 404-634-3552

June 27, 1992 (Saturday)
NATIONAL EXTRAVA-CAN-ZA COLLECTORS CAN-VENTION
Sweden House Lodge, Rockford, Illinois
** EVENT NOW PENDING **

PAINTED LABEL SODA BOTTLE AUCTION

If you collect or deal in Coca-Cola or any ACL sodas, here is your chance to acquire some better bottles. Auction lists will be sent March 1st, 1992. Prime opportunity for collectors or investors in antiques. Send for extensive listing. Soda Mart, 1055 Ridgecrest Drive, Goodlettsville, TN 37072. Phone (615)859-5236 Fax (615)859-5238.



Pepsi logo gets face lift for '90s

By Desiree French
USA TODAY

A new Pepsi logo and package design will begin appearing in U.S. stores in December.

It will be the eighth major logo change made by Pepsi this century, says spokesman Andrew Giangola.

The word "Pepsi" will be removed from its current position inside a red and blue bull-eye swirl and will run vertically along cans and horizontally along bottles. Also changing logos for



1991: Will be rolled out in some markets in December.

Diet Pepsi and caffeine-free Pepsi and the company letterhead and flag. Pepsi says consumer research shows that the new logo is more upbeat.



CAN-O-GRAM

ST. LOUIS VESS CELEBRATES 75 YEARS WITH CANS By Michael M. Eilling

1991 marks Vess Beverages, Inc., of St. Louis, MO, diamond anniversary. They are issuing commemorative cans to mark the event. The cans feature advertising from the early days of soda bottling.



The first can of the series is Whistle Orange, better known as "Thirsty? Just Whistle". The reverse has a picture of two young boys in Sunday clothes playing "guess who" with the question being a paper label Whistle Orange bottle of 1916. The caption reads "You can't fool me!" as the blinded boy knows the answer. This is an example of early Vess advertising art.

The second can of the series is Vess Grape. This can has a picture, circa 1940, of two painted label soda bottles held by two young boys with black eyes. The caption reads, "The Delicious Way To Douse A Fight!" and the boys have happily stopped the rough house. The boys are dressed in play clothes and sport "butch" haircuts.

Above the pictures on the cans is the Vess 75th Anniversary logo in the pose of a traditional crown-top bottle cap. Although Vess ceased returnable bottle production years ago, they still market a 10-oz. throw away bottle with crown-tops for traditional vending machine use. It may pay for us to watch and see if an honest anniversary cap is issued!

The first issue cans are all steel cans made by the Crown Cork & Seal company, the same company that makes their crown caps. However, with the recent end to the Persian Gulf War, the aluminum market has all but crashed, and the expected lower cost for aluminum cans may result in aluminum anniversary cans too. All cans include the appropriate state refund notices plus the required West Virginia tax logo pressed into the top, and the printed "LTP" for the Louisiana Tax Paid requirement.

These cans are worth it for the attempt to say everything at once. I mean everything. There's even a Hebrew logo on them that means they're kosher!

A BRIEF HISTORY OF VESS BEVERAGES, INC.

It all began in 1916. A soft drink pioneer named Vess Jones produced a new carbonated beverage and called it Whistle Orange. The new flavor was an immediate success. At one point, Whistle Orange was bottled by more than four hundred soft drink bottlers around the country. Jones later expanded into other flavors which became known as Vess soda.

Then came the disastrous stock market crash of 1929. Vess Jones sold his company to Leroy Schneebarger for the sum of \$10,000. Schneebarger proved to be one of the early soft drink industry's most imaginative marketers and under his direction the company prospered. Vess became a leading brand in many parts of the country and was always at the forefront of change and innovation. Vess was the first bottler in the United States to offer instant cash awards by printing prize amounts on the inside of their bottle caps. And Vess was decades ahead of the competition by introducing the first caffeine-free cola in 1946. Always trying to improve it's market share, Vess introduced the first 16 ounce returnable bottle to St. Louis with the advent of the 3V Cola. The three "v's" stood for Vim, Vigor and Vitality. But the years of glory and growth were about to come to an abrupt end.

In 1968, Leroy Schneebarger sold the company to an out of town conglomerate and sales began a downward spiral. By 1975, Vess sales had dropped to 650,000 cases annually.

Then another Schneebarger entered the picture. Don R. Schneebarger, who had worked for many years at Vess while his father Leroy operated the firm, purchased the ailing soft drink company. It was at that point that the rebuilding process began.

The modern Vess Beverages, Inc. is a privately held corporation with corporate headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri. Under the younger Schneebarger's guidance, Vess has once again become one of the largest independent soft drink manufacturers in the nation. Company sales have surpassed the eleven million case mark and continue to grow at a rapid pace.

During the past several years, Vess has begun an aggressive expansion program which has yielded impressive results. Vess soda is now being sold in thirty-three states around the country and in numerous foreign countries as well.

The company has invested heavily in modern production facilities and state-of-the-art equipment to insure maximum efficiencies and the highest quality standards. Vess now produces more total cases than any other soft drink bottler in St. Louis.

In addition to the production based in their headquarters plant, Vess soft drinks are also produced by a franchise bottler in Omaha, Nebraska and by contract packers in other cities around the country.

In 1988, a highly sophisticated reverse osmosis water purification system was installed in the St. Louis plant. While other bottlers use chemically treated water, Vess uses only purified water. Vess also removes all salt from their products. There is no other soft drink manufacturer in the country offering the consumer both of these product benefits.

During 1989, Vess introduced its new line of Diet Vess flavors with 100% NutraSweet. The use of the NutraSweet brand sweetener is one more indication that Vess is dedicated to producing a superior product at a popular price.

Sales of Vess soft drinks in St. Louis alone during 1989 will exceed six and one half million cases. According to independent research, the Vess brand ranks third in St. Louis market share:

Brand	Share
Pepsi-Cola	33%
Coca-Cola	28%
Vess	20%
All Others	19%
	100%

And so the Vess tradition continues. If only Vess Jones were here to watch it grow....

Pepsi-Cola introduces 'more youthful' logo

Reuter

drink for today and tomorrow," Weatherup said, adding that Pepsi's taste would not be changed.

"Selling soft drinks is an ongoing marketing process, and this is just another development," said George Thompson, an analyst who tracks Pepsi for Prudential Bache Research. "People get tired of seeing the same thing all the time."

New York, N.Y. Pepsi-Cola Co. introduced a sleek new logo Monday that is designed to carry the carbonated soft drink past its 100th anniversary and into the 21st century.

To be introduced nationwide in December, the logo comprises a wavy red, white and blue circle punctuating a red band. The italicized word Pepsi, in blue, runs along the band.

The effect is that of a moving train, not unlike something that might be found on a football helmet.

"Consumer research shows that the new logo design looks more youthful, more refreshing and that it has twice the shelf impact compared to the competition," Craig Weatherup, Pepsi-Cola president and chief executive officer, said in a statement.

"These graphics are designed to take our logo into the 21st century and to strengthen our position as the soft

Pepsi-Cola to take on new logo by year end

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Pepsi-Cola is changing its familiar red, white and blue logo, the company announced Sunday.

The new-look cans and bottles of Pepsi and Diet Pepsi should start turning up in stores nationwide by the end of the year and in global markets throughout 1992, Pepsi officials said.

Out is the swirl logo featuring a wide red horizontal bar topped by a red and blue circular design with the word "pepsi" in blue in the middle.

In is a much narrower red bar topped by a smaller version of the old logo, minus the brand name in the middle. On cans, the word "pepsi" is written sideways and vertically in italic capital typeface. On bottles, the red bar is horizontal and the word "Pepsi" can be easily read without turning the soda sideways.

"Consumer research shows that the new logo design looks more youthful, more refreshing, and that it has twice the shelf impact compared to the competition," said Craig Weather-

erup, president of Pepsi-Cola North America. He said the change has been in the works for four years.

The new design for Diet Pepsi closely resembles the new design for Pepsi, but with more white and less red. The change is meant to more closely link the sister products, Weatherup said.

It's the first permanent change in Pepsi's logo since 1973 and the eighth this century.

The change comes as Pepsi trails Coca-Cola in overall domestic market share by 4 percent to 31 percent, Myerers said.

A Coca-Cola spokesman reacted by saying surveys show their product has the most familiar trademark in the world.

"When your competition has the best-known logo, change becomes a way of life. But a Pepsi with a new logo is still just a Pepsi," said spokesman Randy Donaldson.

Industry analyst Jesse Myers, publisher of the magazine Beverage Digest, called the new Pepsi logo "very contemporary."

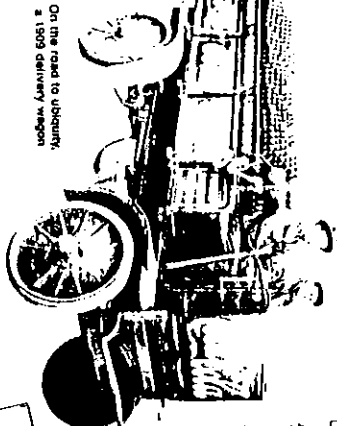


COKE VS. PEPSI VS. EVERYBODY ELSE GREAT MOMENTS IN THE COLA WARS



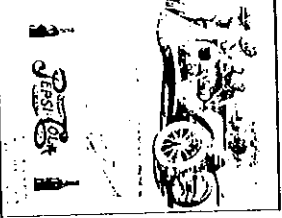
Inventor by accident, Pemberton

A star is born, 1886.
Druggist John Pemberton, creator of "Globe Flower Cough Syrup" and "French Wine of Coca," whips up a refreshing nut extract in back of his Atlanta home. By accident, his syrup is mixed with carbonated, rather than plain, water. *Coca-Cola* is born.



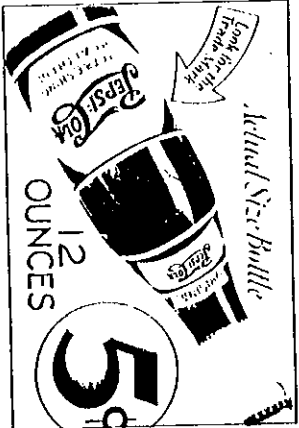
On the road to ubiquity, a 1909 delivery wagon

A star is borned, 1899.
Coke president Asa Carter, skeptic of the fountain drink's future as a bottled beverage, sells the company's first official bottling franchise for \$1. He doesn't even bother to collect the dollar.



Any celebrity endorser? Answer: Oldfield, 1909

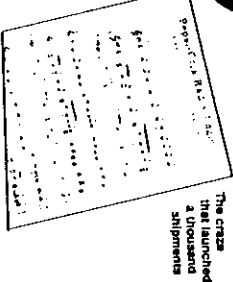
Arrival of a rival, 1902.
Another druggist, Caleb Bradham of New Bern, N.C., trademarks the name of a new cola concoction. His friends call it "Brid's Drink," but Bradham prefers "Pepsi-Cola," in honor of the drink's supposed soothing effects on dyspepsia, or upset stomach.



Pepsi's formula for 5 cents, 12 ounces, 5 cents

An early lesson in recycling, 1933.
By the 1930s, Coke had seen some 1100 trademarked soft drinks come and go. Pepsi, already declared bankrupt twice, finds salvation in an unlikely form: used 12-ounce beer bottles. Pepsi can fill those 12-ounce bottles, sell them for a nickel—the same price as a 6½-ounce Coke—and still make money.

From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli, 1941.
As the U.S. enters World War II, Coke's president vows to see that every man in uniform gets a bottle of *Coca-Cola* for 3 cents, wherever he is and whatever it costs the company. Bottling plants follow the troops, and by war's end the company has a network of bottlers established worldwide.

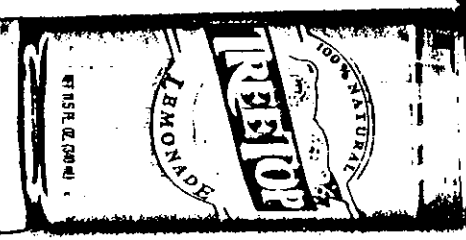
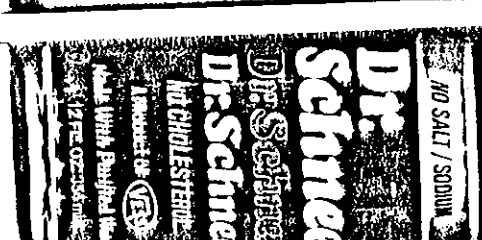
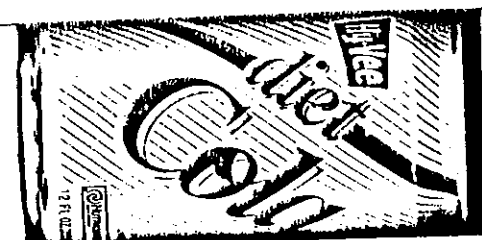
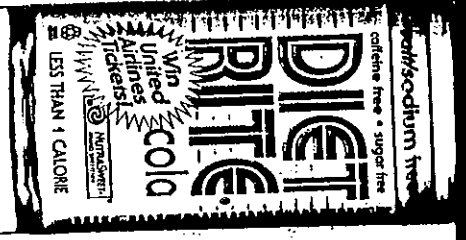
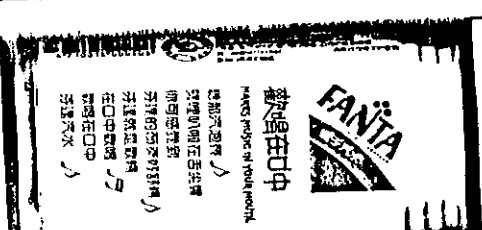
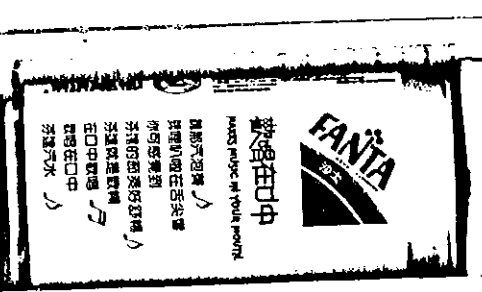
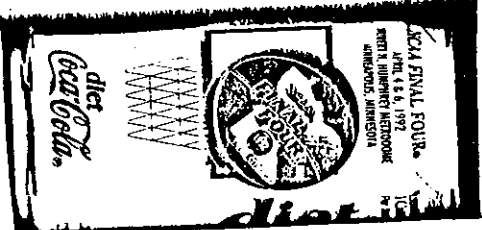
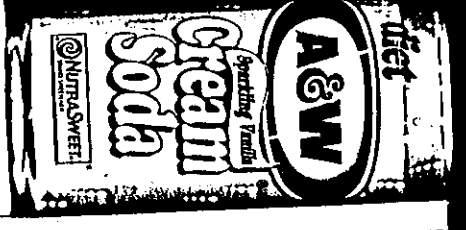


The craze that launched a thousand shipments

The mother of all jingles, 1939.
Pepsi sales are further railed by a 15-second jingle cry so popular it is featured in juke boxes and played for free on radio stations. In 1940, the radio industry rates the Star-Spangled Banner the best-known song in America. Number two? "*Pepsi-Cola* hits the spot. Taste full ounces, that's a lot. There's much for a nickel, too. *Pepsi-Cola* is the drink for you."



A perennial Coke pitchman, dressed in brand colors



COCA-COLA VS. PEPSI

PREFERENCE OR PREJUDICE?

Taste is such a subjective matter that we don't usually conduct preference tests for food. The most you can say about anyone's preference, even a gourmet's, is that it's one person's opinion. But because the two big colas are marketed so relentlessly, we've wondered how big a role taste preference actually plays in brand loyalty. We set up a taste test that challenged people who identified themselves as either Coca-Cola or Pepsi fans: Find your brand in a blind tasting.

We recruited staff volunteers who professed a strong liking for either Coca-Cola Classic or Pepsi, Diet Coke, or Diet Pepsi. These were people who thought they'd have no trouble telling their brand from the other brand.

We eventually located 19 regular-cola drinkers and 27 diet-cola drinkers. Then we fed them four unidentified samples of cola one at a time, regular colas for the one group, diet versions for the other. We asked them to tell us whether each sample was Coke or Pepsi; then we analyzed the ballots statistically to compare the participants' choices with what mere guesswork could have accomplished.

Getting all four samples right was a tough test, but not too tough, we thought, for people who believed they could recognize their brand. In the end, only 7 out of 19 regular-cola drinkers correctly identified their brand of choice in all four trials. The diet-cola drinkers did a little worse—only 7 of 27 identified all four samples correctly.

While both groups did better than chance would predict, nearly half the participants in each group made the wrong choice two or more times. Two people got all four samples

wrong. Overall, half the participants did about as well on the last round of tasting as on the first, so fatigue, or taste burnout, was not a factor.

Our preference-test results suggest that only a few Pepsi partisans and Coke fanatics may really be able to tell their favorite brand based on taste alone. So perhaps you should ignore the TV commercials and the rest of the marketing hype, and choose your brand by taste and price.



The real thing? In our sensory rooms, we fed Coke and Pepsi lovers unmarked samples one at a time and asked them to tell us what they were drinking. The results may distress ad-writers for the two megabrands.

CONSUMER REPORTS AUGUST 1991

NEW CANS

A&W Cream Soda

A&W Diet Cream Soda

Diet Rite Cola "Win United Airlines Tickets!"

-Oklahoma City, OK

Tree Top Lemonade -Selah, WA

MIDDLE ROW

Coke "NCAA FINAL FOUR" (Classic & Diet) -Eagan, MN

Hy-Vee Cola (Reg. & Diet) -Chariton, IA

BOTTOM ROW

Panta Sarsaparilla "Makes Music in Your Mouth" -Taiwan

Panta Orange "Makes Music in Your Mouth" - Taiwan

Dr. Schnee (Vess) -Maryland Heights, MO

Dr. Schnee Diet (Vess) -Maryland Heights, MO

The price is wrong, 1946.

Pepsi finds it can no longer afford to offer 7 cents as much for a nickel, too. By positioning itself for years as the bargain cola, it has courted the least loyal of customers: the price-shopper. When the price advantage vanishes, so do many Pepsi drinkers. Pepsi is left with an image as an inferior cola—a cola some status-conscious consumers pour into Coke bottles before serving to guests. So Pepsi changes its formula, then takes on the tougher task of changing its image.



Pepsi wooed the American woman in a 1950 magazine ad

The light touch, 1950.

Pepsi's TV and print ads stress the theme "Light Refreshment." Their target? The young American woman: supermarket shopper and household cola buyer. To appeal to her, Pepsi offers the first 26-ounce "hostess" bottle. The strategy will eventually pay off. Today, Pepsi claims to be the number-one-selling item in the supermarket. (Coke disputes that claim, however.)

Sixty-two-year-old Pepsi positions itself as the youthful cola



Generational warfare, 1963.

Pepsi introduces the "Pepsi Generation," a slogan that endures (in Pepsi's reckoning) as the longest-running ad theme in history.

Challenge booms bring the cola wars to the shopping mall

Consumers revolt, 1985. Fiddling with the formula puts Coke fans on the warpath. In Seattle, retired real-estate investor Gay Mullins founds the Old Cola Drinkers of America and sets up a hot line for angry consumers. A Beverly Hills wine merchant buys 500 cases of vintage Coke and sells them at a premium. Meanwhile, back at Coke Central, some 1500 calls a day and vanloads of mail drive home the public's wrath. Writes one disgruntled consumer: "Changing Coke is

Rebel leader Mullins tastes victory



like God making the grass purple or putting toes on our ears or teeth on our knees. Coke gets the message. After three months of slumping sales, it announces that Coca-Cola Classic will join "new" Coke on supermarket shelves. ABC interrupts its soap opera General Hospital to bring consumers the news.



Battle update, 1991. And what of the ill-fated "new" Coke? In an effort to revamp its image and recharge its sales, Coca-Cola recently began test-marketing a new name for "new" Coke. Ready, world? Coke II.

Coming soon to a shelf near you?

A new challenge, 1975.

In Dallas, *Dy Pepper* has edged Pepsi out of the number-two slot behind top-selling Coke. Spurred by market research showing consumer preference for Pepsi over Coke in blind taste tests, Pepsi's district manager sets up in-store "Challenge Booths." Pepsi's sales immediately improve, and Pepsi launches the Challenge nationwide.

How sweet it was, 1980.

Coca-Cola announces it will no longer use 100 percent sucrose (a sugar made from sugar cane or sugar beets) to sweeten its flagship brand. By switching to 50 percent corn syrup, it saves an estimated \$120-million a year. Pepsi makes the switch in 1983. Today, both colas are 100 percent corn-syrup sweetened (except for a kosher supply offered in certain markets during Passover).

New, but improved? 1985.

On the evening of April 23, all three network news programs open with this flash: Coke is changing its formula. The company claims it stumbled across a better, sweeter recipe for the flagship brand while developing *Diet Coke*. Pepsi responds that Coke is declaring defeat in the Cola Wars and gives its employees a day off for victory celebrations.

COKE AND PEPSI: WHO'S GOT THE RIGHT ONE?

Coke and Pepsi dominate the airwaves, but are they the best? Some other colas as good as the megabrands, we found



or decades Coke and Pepsi have slugged it out in an orgy of advertising on which the soft-drink superpowers spend more than \$300 million a year. A glance at the bottom line tells why the megabrands want the consumer to take sides: Every percentage point of the soft-drink market is worth \$460-million a year in retail sales. Between them Coca-Cola and Pepsi now own 70 percent of that market. Royal Crown, their nearest competitor in the cola business, can claim less than 3 percent.

Cola's account for about three-quarters of all soft drinks sold. Why cola, of all things, should utterly dominate all other soft-drink flavors is a mystery: no one has satisfactorily explained. Flavors like orange or cherry show up in a wide variety of food and drink, but they've never set the world on fire. The cola flavor—essentially confined to that one sweet,izzy, dark drink—has. Obviously, heavy advertising, wide availability, and decades of familiarity all contribute to cola's phenomenal popularity. Some have

speculated that mild addiction plays a role as well. Regular colas contain an abundance of sugars and, often, a good deal of caffeine (an average of 40 milligrams of caffeine per can of caffeinated cola, compared with about 100 milligrams in a cup of brewed coffee). And caffeine, at least, is mildly habit-forming.

What's the real thing?

As the TV commercials for Coke and Pepsi (see the next page) laher us with images of youth and beauty, family togetherness, celebrity and patriotism, one can easily forget that the objects of attention are two soda pops whose taste is similar enough that many people have a hard time telling them apart. Which brings up an issue not generally addressed in the advertising: How these drinks actually taste, and how they differ. We conducted taste tests to find out. Very little, if any, of a cola's flavor comes from the African kola nut, ostensibly the identifying flavorant. Before our taste trials, we obtained some kola-nut extract to familiarize our sensory panelists with real kola. Its family: woody, faintly fruity

aroma is but a remote ancestor of what people perceive as the flavor of a cola soft drink.

Mostly, the cola flavor in a cola drink comes from a combination of citrus, vanilla, caramel, and "brown spice" flavors, the latter being an under-represented hint of such spices as cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice. But if cola drinks all use a similar combination of flavors, don't they taste pretty much alike?

There's a commonly held belief that the major difference between Coca-Cola and Pepsi is that Pepsi is sweeter. But our taste tests demonstrated that there's a little more to it than that. Not much—but a little. Coca-Cola (called Coca-Cola Classic these days to distinguish it from the has-been "new" Coke) has a predominant vanilla flavor. Pepsi has a predominant citrus flavor, specifically lime. Although Pepsi has a little more sweetener than Classic Coke, it doesn't really taste sweeter. The sour citrus offsets the sweetness. The "new" Coke has less vanilla flavor than Classic Coke, and so tastes a little closer to Pepsi.

We also found that plenty of other



reach and fast-paced imagery of TV, both Coke and Pepsi seek to directly engage the consumer in various sweepstakes, movie tie-ins, and promotions. In the mid-'80s, Coca-Cola signed a deal with Murjani International to produce an apparel line that turned consumers into walking billboards for the soft drink. This summer, T-shirts, boxer shorts, jackets, hats, and children's wear echoed Diet Pepsi's "You Got the Right One, Baby" theme. Initial orders from retailers were three to four times higher than they were for Batman-related items a few years ago, according to one report.

And in Coke's corner
New Kids on the Block, left, Michael Jordan, top, and Elton John.

Soda-pop imagery has become such a driving force in American culture, says Adweek columnist Barbara Lippert, that we forget the commercials are trying to sell us something. This adds to a general confusion about what is a commercial and what is not. Says Lippert, "You lose the line between what is selling a product in an honest way, and the fact that everything in America is a product being sold—whether it's a celebrity, a television show, whether it's anything."

Coke, in fact, claims that our popular image of Santa Claus—a hearty, beefy, and bearded fellow dressed in the brand colors of red and white—is largely the result

of a series of holiday promotions that the company began running in 1931. "Our Santa... has become not only the personification of 'The Spirit of Christmas,'" a Coke advertising executive once enthused about the illustrator Haddon Sundblom's representations, "but he has earned his canonization by first winning our love and creating within us all the will to believe!"

And not only that, he worked for nothing. Now there was a celebrity endorser to gladden any cola maker's heart.



Michael Jordan and New Kids on the Block have plugged Coke. Paula Abdul, Elton John, and a roster of football players have taken the field for Diet Coke, though star quarterback Joe Montana—as well as Michael J. Fox and Billy Crystal—have pitched Diet Pepsi. As a result, it has become increasingly difficult for consumers to keep track of who's selling what for whom. But since surveys show that most consumers believe celebrities are just in it for the money and probably don't drink the soft drink they're endorsing, that may not matter much anyway.

"The thing about soda commercials is that they actually have nothing to say," says David Vadehra, president of the advertising-research firm Video Storyboard Tests.



Their goal, Vadehra explains, is to keep the product in the public eye through sheer entertainment. Indeed, Americans gulp down soft-drink advertising with as much abandon as they swallow the sweet stuff itself. Pitches for Pepsi-Cola were rated as America's favorite advertising last year in two separate polls of consumers. Both Coke and Pepsi, in fact, have consistently finished within the Top 10 for the dozen years that Video Storyboard Tests has surveyed 25,000 people to find out which TV commercials they like most.

Diet Pepsi rose above all the usual Super Bowl soft-drink ballyhoo this year by finally putting endorser Ray Charles's musical skills to work after running a series of gags about someone switching the blind singer's beloved Diet Pepsi for a Diet Coke. With enough repetition, his "You Got the Right One, Baby, Uh-Huh" jingle could become as embedded in consumers' minds as Coke's "Things Go Better with Coca-Cola" theme was a generation ago, or as Pepsi's "Twice as much for a nickel, too" was in the 1940s.

While cola advertising is best suited to the broad

Illustration by Margaret Vence

THE BATTLE FOR YOUR BRAIN



Cola commercials offer some of the best entertainment on television. But what are they really selling? PepsiCo's Frito-Lay division in one hand, and a Diet Schwarzkopf. And he had a bag of Doritos (a product of Schwarzkopf) in the other.

In the "you-are-what-you-herb-drinks" school of advertising that has dominated cola commercials in recent times, it's really not enough to make consumers feel that your brand is on the side of the angels. You've got to make them feel that competing brands are evil incarnate. And so, as Calloway's dream continued, General Schwarzkopf faded away and Saddam Hussein appeared. You guessed it: He was drinking a Coca-Cola.

In soda-pop culture, good is usually represented by the hip and young-at-heart who drink Brand A; bad, by the square and fed-up folk who drink Brand B. In one recent spot, Pepsi is mistakenly delivered to a retirement community. The Coke that the old folks were supposed to receive winds up at a fraternity house. The oldsters boogie after sipping their Cokes.

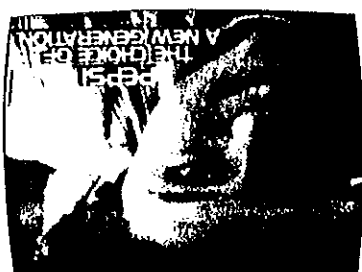
Meanwhile, in a commercial for Diet Coke, a sultry, skimpily dressed, guitar-playing Jerry Hall (model and wife of Mick Jagger) addresses the camera: "This is it honey, I'm leaving you... I don't care how cool you think you are. You just don't excite me anymore.... Goodbye Pepsi. Diet Coke, let's rock 'n' roll."

The chairman of PepsiCo Inc., D. Wayne Calloway, stood before Nancy and Ronald Reagan and a thousand or so other folks who had gathered for his induction into the National Sales Hall of Fame last March and talked about a dream he said he'd had the night before.

"I was wandering in the desert, and a joyful figure appeared," Calloway recalled. "It was Norman Schwarzkopf, and he had a bag of Doritos (a product of Schwarzkopf) in one hand, and a Diet Pepsi in the other."

"The overall message is that life will never be boring, that you will be sexually popular beyond your wildest dreams, and that you'll always be able to dance well if you drink cola," says Dr. Carol Moog, a clinical psychologist who analyzes advertising.

In recent years, the two companies have raced to sign the celebrities of the moment to endorse their brands. Michael Jackson, M.C. Hammer and Madonna—very briefly—have moonwalked, rapped, and wailed for Pepsi.



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Cola taste just as good. Most taste a little more like Pepsi than like Coca-Cola. If people could suspect for a moment the brand loyalty that the cola giants have spent so much to instill, they might be just as happy with other, often cheaper cola brands.

Sweetness and light

For many years, Coke and Pepsi had the soft-drink market pretty much to themselves, with a few minor brands struggling in the background. The soft-drink makers contented themselves with turning out just one variety, much as Ford used to insist that all its cars be black. But 30 years ago, when Royal Crown brought out the first diet cola, saccharin-sweetened Diet Rite, brand lines started proliferating. Many of the new cola products were designed to have a separate identity. When Coca-Cola got into the act with Tab, its own saccharin-sweetened diet-cola entry, the drink was not promoted as a sugar-free Coke.

But modern marketing strategies cultivate the megabrand concept,

applying a widely recognized brand name to numerous "line extensions." Thus we see various permutations, including regular and sugar-free, caffeinated and caffeine-free versions, all bearing the name Coke or Pepsi or RC.

Megabrand marketing accomplishes two things: It creates an instant identity for a new product, and it helps to crowd a competitor's product off the shelves. If a store has to stock five different things called Coke, there's less room for other products. Nonetheless, a small percentage of the cola market belongs to other brands: Our shoppers found 145 colas in the stores, from 56 mostly tiny brands.

The real sparkle nowadays is in the sugar-free colas. Americans have become more calorie-conscious, and sales of diet colas have gone up some 50 percent in the last seven years. Not surprisingly, Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi are the market leaders.

At least part of the upsurge can be attributed to the sweetener aspartame, known by the brand name NutraSweet. Aspartame has

less aftertaste than saccharin does. It's the sweetener now used in most diet soft drinks.

Among CONSUMER REPORTS readers we surveyed last year, the shift to diet colas is dramatic: Where nationally 3 out of 10 cola drinkers drink the diet stuff, 5 of 10 readers have made the shift. That doesn't mean they all like diet cola. At least some of them said they preferred the taste of naturally sweetened cola. (Among readers who drink both diet and nondiet colas, there was a clear preference for the sugar-sweetened versions.)

Our tests

Since we couldn't test all the colas our shoppers found in the stores, we eliminated regional and "boutique" brands unavailable to most readers. That left a manageable number of national brands and widely available store brands.

We tested 28 colas, covering four types: regular and diet in both caffeinated and caffeine-free versions. The roster includes the giants Coca-Cola and Pepsi; the smaller Royal Crown, C&C, and Shasta; and

the store brands Big K (Kroger), Cragmont (Sateway), A&P, and C&K (Winn Dixie).

Our primary sensory tests measure quality rather than taste preference. A taste panel, trained to identify and score each sensory nuance, evaluated the colas for 18 attributes, from fizziness to "cola impact" to individual spice notes.

To us, an excellent cola should be quite fizzy, with moderate cola

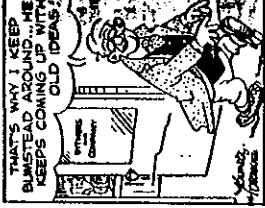
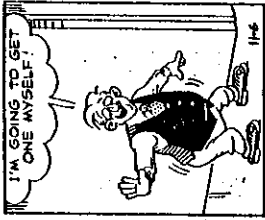
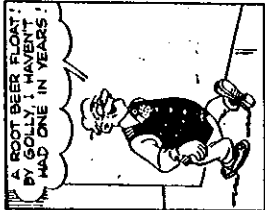
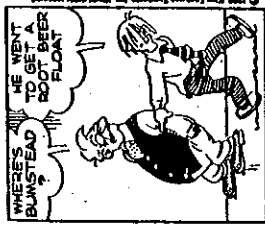
impact. The constituent flavors should be well blended, and there should be no off-flavors or defects. Those can arise from the product's formulation. An artificial sweetener might leave a lingering aftertaste, say: Or a cherry flavor might be too prominent for a cola. They can also result from mishandling. When colas sit around too long or is stored in too warm a place, the flavor oils start to deteriorate, creating a tell-

tale piney note, somewhat like pine-scented cleaner.

We came across several individual samples with the piney off-flavor, but they were isolated cases. Such samples didn't turn up consistently enough for us to downgrade a brand.

No cola was judged excellent. But nearly all the regular colas, both caffeinated and caffeine-free, were judged very good (Big K and Cragmont were the exceptions).

Blondie



Comic submitted by Paul Rebner



THE BATTLE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Sometimes as opponents, sometimes as allies, Coke and Pepsi wage a fierce battle for supermarket supremacy.

The fiercest battles of today's cola wars are being waged in the aisles of the nation's supermarkets. Where shelf space is precious and stakes are high. Last year, Americans spent \$8.6 billion on soft drinks, downing an average of 47.4 gallons apiece. Soda fountains and vending machines accounted for much of that volume, but soft drinks rang up at least 60 percent of their sales in grocery and convenience stores.

Supermarkets need soft drinks as much as soft drinks need supermarkets. While soft drinks produce no more profit, ounce for ounce, than the average food-store item, the traffic draw makes them a major source of revenue.

Bul. Ales. Food stores must also sell food. They can offer only so much space to cola and its carbonated kin. A franchisee to displace shelf space (an annual or quarterly event), a franchisee can prove that its brand outdid the competition in a green market. It can win more space—at the expense of those competitors. Essentially, the more drinks a brand sells, the more space it gets next time. Now, how to make those soft drinks move?

From matchbooks to Michael

In 1912, the Advertising Club of America voted *Coca-Cola* the best-advertised product in the country. Eighty years ago, its 1.2-million ad budget bought five million signs, 10 million matchbooks, and one million paper fans, in addition to newspaper and magazine advertisements.

By 1989, Coke was spending more than \$1.4-billion to woo the world's taste buds. Pepsi was spending nearly \$1.5-billion, a good chunk of their money went to television advertising and celebrity endorsements.

Celebrities have long been a weapon in the cola wars, but they took on a decisive role in 1984, when Pepsi paid Michael Jackson \$5-million for two commercials and the right to sponsor concert tour. Entertaining as such things may be, a moonwalking Michaels and hip jingles don't guarantee a brand's success in the cola market. When it comes to sales, nothing speaks louder than price.

Soft drinks, hard sell

Except for die-hard brand loyalists, people who buy cola tend buy whatever is on sale. It's estimated that as much as 30 percent of all cola sold in food stores is sold at a discount, promoted through the supermarkets' newspaper ads and in-store displays.

How do brands get that special treatment? In many stores, bottlers buy it through what's known in their trade as "calendar marketing agreements." In exchange for quarterly payments substantial rebates on the soft drinks sold, bottlers agree to "feature" a brand for specific weeks of the year. That means giving it the best price in the store. "I call them lock-out agreements," says Jim Wallace, an attorney for Royal Crown Cola. "There's nothing wrong with getting specials in stores, but Coke and Pepsi effectively lock out the competition by monopolizing the calendar."

One example: In 1986, according to a document Royal Crown Cola filed with the Federal Trade Commission, Coke entered an agreement with a San Antonio supermarket chain requiring the store to "feature" its product exclusively for 32 weeks a year. In return, the four-store chain received \$21,600. What about the remaining 20 weeks? Pepsi signed on for them with a calendar marketing agreement of its own, according to other documents. "These days Coke and Pepsi may leave some weeks open," Wallace concedes. "Odd weeks in January and February," when colder weather means sagging sales.

Says Royal Crown bottler George Kain of Tucson, Ariz., "We've had situations where our price may be 20 cents cheaper than the featured brand, but without the proper ads or in-store displays, we couldn't do enough volume to make the discount worthwhile. Shoppers assume that the featured brand is the best buy, and they don't look any further."

With their sales volume down, the smaller bottlers suffer even more when it next comes time for grocers to allocate shelf space. "And with less space," says Kain, "we must restock more often. That drives up our operating costs and makes us less competitive."

In 1984, four independent North Carolina bottlers filed a civil suit against their Coke and Pepsi counterparts, charging that those bottlers' calendar marketing agreements amounted to price-fixing intended to squeeze out the competition. The Pepsi bottler settled out of court; the Coke bottler fought and lost. (The parent companies were not implicated.)

Pepsi and Coke bottlers like to characterize calendar marketing agreements as a marketing tool that ensures the best price for the product. To other bottlers, it's a device that impairs the ability of smaller companies to stay competitive and, as a result, restricts the choices available to consumers.

As the accompanying test report points out, however, that choice is basically between freewheeling and freewheeling. If one or the other happens to be the better choice of a low promotional price, stock up. And if you can buy freewheeling cheap, try it. You may be surprised how little the brand name or the advertising matters.

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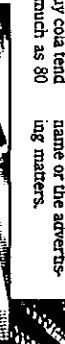
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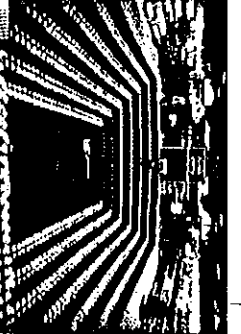
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Progressive Corp.



Pop art inspired by cola-company incentives, stores devote floor space and creative energy to displays. These efforts marked recent Fourth of July and football-season promotions.



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RATINGS

Colas

Listed by types, within types, listed in order of sensory quality. Closely ranked colas were essentially similar in overall quality.

1 Sensory Index. Overall sensory quality, based on tests by CU's trained panel.

2 Price. Per six-pack, average price paid nationally over the past three months.

3 Calories. Calories per 12-ounce can, according to manufacturer. Diet varieties should have less than one calorie per can.

4 Caffeine. Per can, according to manufacturer. Caffeine-free colas should have less than one milligram per can.

5 Sodium. According to manufacturer.

6 Sensory comments. An excellent cola should be moderately sweet, slightly sour, very slightly bitter, cola impact—a blend of citrus, vanilla, brown-spice, and caramel flavors—should range from low moderate to moderate. Flavors should blend well. Hints of cherry, chocolate/coffee, or wintergreen are allowable, but the cola shouldn't taste too much like root beer or cherry cola. All the diet colas had some "artificial sweetener impact"—a sweet taste that lacks the fullness of sugar that sweet taste and a bit-burns buds and then lingers in the mouth. Defects noted: a taste reminiscent of baking soda; a vegetable/fartthy taste like aging celery.

Product	Sensory Index					Price Per Six-Pack	Calories	Caffeine	Sodium	Sensory Comments
	P	F	G	VG	E					
Regular colas										
Coke-Cola Classic						\$1.74	144	46 mg	14 mg	Distinct vanilla note, strong cola impact. Slightly less sour than most.
Pepsi						1.74	160	38	2	Distinct lime/citrus note, strong cola impact. Slightly less sour than most.
7-UP						1.80	154	46	8	Very slight coffee/chocolate note.
RC Cola						1.88	173	36	1	—
C & C Cola						1.08	156	33	28	Slight cherry note.
Thirste Cola						1.14	160	43	24	Slight cherry note.
Chak Cola (Winn-Dixie)						1.02	153	48	5.2	Slightly less sour than most.
Big K Cola (Kroger)						.86	154	6	10	—
Regular caffeine-free colas										
Pepsi Caffeine Free						1.86	160	—	2	Distinct lime/citrus note, strong cola impact.
Coke-Cola Classic Caffeine Free						1.86	144	—	14	Distinct vanilla note, strong cola impact, slightly less sour than most.
C & C Caffeine Free						1.08	162	—	28	—
Coke Caffeine Free						2.16	154	—	8	—
A & P Cola						1.14	180	—	0	Distinct citrus note.
Thirste Caffeine Free						1.26	160	—	24	Distinct fruity note.
Chak Caffeine Free (Starway)						1.02	160	—	70	Vegetable/fartthy off-note; slight coffee/chocolate note; more bitter than most.
Diet colas										
Big K Diet Cola (Kroger)						1.80	—	36	2	Distinct lime/citrus note.
Big K Diet Cola (Kroger)						1.02	—	6	30	—
Diet Coke						1.90	—	45	8	—
Diet Thirste Cola						1.80	—	43	79	Distinct cherry note.
Diet RC Cola						1.88	—	48	1	Less cola impact than most.
Chak Diet Cola (Winn-Dixie)						1.02	—	48	50	Nozible artificial-sweetener impact; fruity and very slight wintergreen (food-beer) notes.
Tab Sugar Free						2.04	—	46	8	Big artificial-sweetener impact; strong cola impact; distinct vanilla note.
C & A Diet Cola						1.20	—	34	70	Big artificial-sweetener impact; distinct citrus flavor with artificial orange off-note.
Diet caffeine-free colas										
Diet Pepsi Caffeine Free						1.86	—	—	2	Distinct lime/citrus note.
Diet Coke Caffeine Free						1.86	—	—	8	—
Diet RC Cola Caffeine Free						1.92	—	—	1	—
Starbite Diet Cola Caffeine Free						1.32	—	—	51	Nozible artificial-sweetener impact; slight cherry note.
Cragmont Diet Cola (Starway)						1.02	—	—	70	Big artificial-sweetener impact; medicinal cherry note.

Not labeled caffeine-free. Sweetened partially or wholly with saccharin.