

A Tea Revolution

With new flavors, varieties and functionalities, RTD tea is leading the health and wellness trend. By Heather Landi

No beverage category perhaps better illustrates the impact of the ongoing health and wellness movement on the overall beverage industry than ready-to-drink tea. In only a few short years, the tea category has managed to evolve from being perceived as a morning pick-me-up or afternoon refreshment to being one of the hottest functional beverages on the market.

While RTD tea only has a 2.9-percent share of the beverage market, the category saw 15 percent growth in 2007, preceded by an astounding 26.2 percent jump in 2006, according to Beverage Marketing Corporation. And much of this growth has to do

with the health “halo” associated with RTD tea—high in antioxidants and other health-boosting ingredients as well as, more often than not, all natural or even organic. While tea always has contained healthful properties, the last few years has seen a significant shift in how RTD tea, and even tea ingredients, have been marketed.

“Ten years ago, tea wasn’t really marketed. And if it was, it was marketed as a morning beverage or alternative to those who didn’t like coffee,” notes Heather Biehl, senior scientist, Health Ingredient Technology & Solutions (H.I.T.S.), Wild Flavors. “Now tea is being marketed as high in antioxidants and for general health and well-being.

Consumers are familiar with specific antioxidants found in tea, such as EGCG (epigallocatechin gallate) and companies are calling out these specific antioxidants on packaging.”

Tea extracts and ingredients increasingly are being used outside the tea category, especially in functional beverages. Skinny Water, Function Drink’s Light Weight and Nutrisoda’s Slenderize weight-management drinks all use EGCG for its metabolism-boosting effects, while green tea extract also is used in products like Borba Skin Balance Water and Neo Beauty for its purported anti-aging effects. Taiyo International’s Suntheanine, a patented green tea amino acid ingre-



FLAVORS OF NEW RTD TEA PRODUCT LAUNCHES IN THE US

*JANUARY TO APRIL ONLY; SOURCE: MINTEL GNPD

