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August 8, 2006

Cha Dao Tea launches premium tea in Amcor's PowerFlex PET bottle

Printer Magazines June, 25 2006

The Cha Dao Tea Company has selected PowerFlex polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles from Amcor PET Packaging to launch its premium, preservative-free, natural tea line.

This new entry into the bottled tea category is the brainchild of founder, Ghim-Sim Chua, who stumbled upon the idea when he became increasingly unhappy with commercially available alternatives. Chua grew up in Singapore where he was exposed to a variety of good-tasting teas during his childhood.

"I love to drink tea and I was unhappy with what I could find locally. Much of what I was drinking just didn't taste like tea to me. It was either full of fruit juice or sugar," Chua explains. That's when the idea of introducing stronger and bolder tea varieties to US consumers began to germinate.

"Recently, consumers have been discovering the benefits of flavonoids as antioxidants. It just made sense to develop a line of all natural, preservative-free teas that would offer a healthy alternative for bottled tea drinkers," Chua says. "Hundreds of studies show the flavonoids present in tea act as powerful antioxidants, providing remarkable anti-allergic, anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties," he says.

Chua began to tap into his own lifelong experiences as a tea drinker and kept a discerning palate at the ready when traveling to other countries where tea is consumed as a primary beverage. His journey took him to a variety of tea houses all over Asia and from those experiences, Chua started to zero in on the premium tea varieties he wanted to explore further.

The company was founded in September 2005 and research also began in earnest for the right bottle in which to launch the Cha Dao line. "From the outset, I liked the look of the PowerFlex bottle. Other bottles that we looked at had panels or ribs which didn't present a 'clean' look to consumers. This new technology from Amcor, looked and felt good, plus could handle the hot-fill temperatures we required," Chua says.

Cha Dao selected one of two stock PowerFlex bottles, a 16.9-ounce, long-neck design



"Cha Dao" means "the way of tea," an ancient tradition that is firmly rooted in more than 5000 years of Asian culture.

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with a 38mm finish. (The other stock option is a dome-shouldered bottle.) This allowed the company to launch quickly without incurring any additional tooling costs.

Optional customisation features, such as embossed logos or patterns, can be added in the future, if Cha Dao chooses. Amcor's PowerFlex bottle features a revolutionary patented panel-less design which takes hot-fill (185° degrees Fahrenheit) bottle options to a new level.

Amcor's structural design not only eliminates the panels, but unlike recently launched competitive containers, PowerFlex has a large, completely smooth label panel, free of any kind of ribbing. PowerFlex features a vacuum absorbing base. Previously, sidewall panels were necessary to absorb the distortion that occurs as a hot-filled beverage cools to room temperature. (After the bottle is capped, the filled liquid cools, which, in turn, pulls an internal vacuum that must be dissipated structurally.)

"Bottles with panels create constraints that dramatically limit design options and therefore a brand owner's ability to use the container to creatively market the product," explains David Andison, vice president, business strategies, Amcor PET Packaging.

Up until now, many beverage bottlers did not have a PET alternative that met both their hot-fill and their aesthetic requirements, thereby forcing their premium brands (juices, teas, isotonic, etc.) to stay the course in glass containers.

However, the launch of PowerFlex permanently changes the playing field. Amcor's technical staff, through a combination of design and manufacturing innovations, has created a patent pending bottle that absorbs vacuum via a specially designed base. A unique diaphragm within the base draws upward as the liquid cools. It has the geometric characteristics to enable the inverted cone shaped diaphragm to deflect upward as the vacuum is created.

"Because you no longer have panels in the sidewall, this makes the bottle easier to label. You don't have to worry about mislabeling, missing the vertical bars in applying labels. Nor do you have to worry about the ripple effect labeling over panels can cause," Andison explains.

Additionally, the geometry of the straight wall design gives PowerFlex strong top load characteristics. The straight wall has no points of stress concentration which removes the potential of bending.

"The other thing that is noteworthy about Amcor," explains Chua, "is that the company was willing to take a chance on a new manufacturer when no one else would. Other bottle manufacturers refused to do business with us because our initial quantity requirements were small."

Chua also discovered another benefit from the PET bottle's lightweight characteristics. "We found out early on that distributors wanted to know if our tea was in glass or plastic. Having it in plastic helped us secure distribution because the weight of glass containers coupled with rising fuel costs are having an impact on the distribution system," he says.

The company has launched four varieties: Oolong, Sencha, Chrysanthemum and Jasmine Green Tea with Lemon. The varieties are described as "four distinct flavours in three healthy choices: unsweetened, herbal and low carb."

Another differentiator is that "Cha Dao has double the amount of flavonoids of other brands because we use more premium tea leaves per bottle."

The young company also scored a second place finish in the 2006 Iced Tea Shake-Off competition held at the World Tea Expo. The Jasmine Green Tea with Lemon was honored in the Ready To Drink, Best Sweetened Category.

Three additional flavours are in development and Chua expects them to launch sometime in the third quarter of this year. The tea line is currently available in the Northwest United States, with wider distribution expected by the end of the year. Because the varieties do not contain any preservatives, they are sold refrigerated.

In Chinese, "Cha Dao" means "the way of tea," an ancient tradition that is firmly rooted in more than 5000 years of Asian culture.

The Cha Dao Tea Company prides itself in selecting the finest teas and brewing them the traditional way – in small batches, under exacting time and temperature. Its bottled teas can be strong and bold or light and refreshing, but always reflect the true taste of tea.

Cha Dao's teas are never overwhelmed with artificial additives, juices or sweeteners. Natural ingredients are used with a light touch to add depth, complexity and to enhance the flavor of the tea.

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