

Why Snapple and Pepsi are Going HFCS-Free

Contrary to the media buzz, neither company is making the switch based on consumer health considerations. [By Robin Hilmantel](#)



According to the blogosphere and even a CBS report, Pepsi and Snapple are waging a war on high fructose corn syrup by ditching the substance from their formulas. The truth is not nearly as controversial.

While both companies are introducing new products that use real sugar in place of the syrup, their decisions weren't nutritionally motivated.

"HFCS is essentially the same as table sugar," says Pepsi spokesperson Nicole Bradley, whose brand will introduce Pepsi-Cola Throwback and Mountain Dew Throwback this April, giving customers a taste of the drinks as they were flavored in the '60s and '70s— with natural sugar.

"We wanted to be true to the time that the products represent," Bradley says. "During that time, sugar was the sweetener we used in our soft drinks."

In addition to the retro drinks, which will sport '60s-era logos, recent Pepsi commercials have given consumers a look at Pepsi through the years.

"What's old is new and exciting again," Bradley says. "As we refresh everything with the Pepsi ad campaign that launched at the beginning of the year, we're also celebrating our heritage."

The retrofitted drinks will be available in addition to the standard varieties, which will still be made with HFCS.

Meanwhile, Snapple has started stocking its reformulated line of Premium drinks in stores and expects full distribution by March. Among the changes to the product is a switch from HFCS to real sugar, which was already in the formula for the brand's Super Premium line.

"As a company, we've always seen HFCS and sugar as the same," says Jason Genthner, a Snapple spokesperson. "We listened to our consumers, and the consumer perception is that they wanted sugar in the products."

The conversion is the result of a three-year process and will coincide with a taller, skinnier bottle and new labeling that touts the drinks' premium ingredients.

“The angle from the consumer standpoint is we’ve always claimed we’re the best stuff on Earth,” Genthner says. “We’re just getting better. It’s just a more premium, mature execution of it.”

While some flavors contain up to 40 calories fewer than they did with the previous formula, Genthner is careful to point out that the discrepancy has no correlation to the removal of HFCS.

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“It’s not that the sugar’s less calories than HFCS,” he says. “It’s just that we’ve used different flavor modifiers that have reduced the calories in this one product.”

Snapple will continue to include HFCS in its standard drinks.

“Whether it’s HFCS or sugar, there are no differences in nutritional benefits, and there’s no difference in calories or sweetness,” says Audrae Erickson, president of the Corn Refiners Association of America. “Neither one of these companies are making that claim. ... [Sugar and HFCS] are essentially the same, so there’s no benefit to the consumer of switching one out for the other.”

Pepsi’s throwback drinks will be available until mid-June, while Snapple’s new formula for its premium drinks is a permanent change.

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