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Coming Soon in March 2010

Best of NY Restaurant Show

Jennifer Litz

05 Mar 2010

There were hundreds of exhibitors at this year's well-attended International Restaurant & Foodservice Show of New York, but a few newcomers always stand out from the pack. Here is our roundup of the new and promising offerings:

Mobitable – It's the newest online solution operators never knew they needed. Restaurateurs who want to drive traffic on nights they know will be slow can log in to the program and advertise any amount of tables at whatever percent off they'd like. The information will be accessible to potential diners on the Web and also via a smartphone app. The service is set to debut in April; the first 50 to sign up will get a free trial period.

Natural nonalcoholic drinks – Many exhibitors fulfilled interest in this arena. Sea Breeze company emphasized the profitability of selling their filtered, flavored waters on tap as opposed to giving water away for free, or selling less-green plastic water bottles. Many newer artisan soda companies towed the "natural" line, positioning themselves as healthy and pure as water. **Bruce Cost's new line of Ginger Ale sodas are made with 100 percent whole fresh ginger and pure cane sugar.** Fever Tree, an import from the UK, pushed its line of premium, all-natural mixers, including bitter lemon, lower-calorie tonic water and Ginger Ale. We're seeing these drinks more in fast casual and even QSR segments.

Chefpak – Created for chefs, by chefs, this new "all in one" chef backpack has slots for everything chefs need to get through their days, including a laptop slot, custom knife cases that fit easily in the "pak," cooking utensil space and more.

Sustain a cup – The first cup made with 100 percent recycled post consumer fibers debuted at the show. The price point is supposedly accessible to the average operator because the product is not made of fully compostable materials. Company spokesperson Dean Kalamaras said most operators and people don't end up composting the items anyway.

Vito – This frying oil-cleaning device supposedly reduces the cost of oil by up to 50 percent by extending its life. Vito filters oil in five minutes and stops automatically. It's dishwasher safe, too.


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Good news for ginger ale lovers

By [Leah A. Zeldes](#)

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Bruce Cost

Chef **Bruce Cost's** zippy fresh ginger ales, served at **Big Bowl** and **Wow Bow**, are now being bottled! The restaurants continue to mix fresh ginger ales to order for in-house diners, but you can now buy bottles to take home.

"I've been wanting to do this for 20 years," says Cost, who first developed the recipe for a California restaurant, and authored the cookbook "[Ginger East to West: A Cook's Tour with Recipes, Techniques and Lore](#)" in 1984.

Like the restaurant version, Fresh Ginger Ginger Ale by Bruce Cost starts with fresh ginger roots, cooked up with pure cane sugar. The chef believes this is the first bottled ginger ale not made from an extract.

"We peeled 2,400 pounds of ginger for the first batch," Cost says.

Packaged in 12 ounce glass bottles, the bottled ginger ales contain no preservatives and are made in dated batches, like vintage wines. Cost expects to have his next batch out in January. The all-natural, unfiltered drinks come in three flavors: Original, Jasmine Green Tea and Pomegranate, and sell for \$3 per bottle or \$9 per four pack.

The ginger ales are sold at all locations of Big Bowl ([Gold Coast](#), [River North](#), [Schaumburg](#) and [Lincolnshire](#)) and Wow Bow ([Magnificent Mile](#), [Loop](#) and [River North](#)), [foodlife](#) on the Mag Mile, and via home-delivery grocer [Peapod](#). More retail outlets are in the works.

December 15, 2009 | Tags: [Gold Coast](#), [Lincolnshire](#), [Loop](#), [Magnificent Mile](#), [new](#), [River North](#), [Schaumburg](#), [soft drinks](#) | Category: [City of Chicago](#), [News](#), [Products](#), [Restaurants](#), [Shopping](#), [Suburbs](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

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November 4, 2009...12:05 am

Big Bowl bottled ginger ale

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Big Bowl ginger ale in a bottle

While working on a story on the cuisine of Northern China, I had the pleasure of interviewing and getting recipes from Bruce Cost, chef-partner of Lettuce Entertain You's Asian concepts, including Big Bowl and Wow Bao. He's a veritable master at Asian cooking, published cookbook author, damn interesting to talk to and all-around nice guy. Anyway, I was very happy to see that Big Bowl is now bottling up his fresh ginger ales, and stocking them near the carry-out section right next to the hibiscusiced tea in a can (I had a hankering for pot stickers and beef lettuce wraps after a quick visit to the Puma store). I loved the label design, and the fact that they are made with natural cane sugar. Anyone know if these are also sold in grocery stores? If not, they, and frozen Wow Bao, need to be 6 E. Cedar, 312.640.8888

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Tags [big bowl](#), [bruce cost](#), [chicago asian food](#), [ginger ale](#)

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Melissa

[November 5, 2009 at 8:37 am](#)

I love Wow Bao. I generally don't like bao, except for these. It's my treat when I go downtown. I'll have to try the gingerale. the packaging is great.

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[baomouth](#)

[November 11, 2009 at 4:41 pm](#)

Wow Bao sells the bottled gingerale as well, PLUS we make fresh gingerales in house: original, pomegranate and green tea.

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Broccoli rabe salad with cops and fried egg, Clyde Common, Portland, OR

• **Eliz-a-bit**

"The worse the beer, the colder it has to be served, and the worse the coffee, the hotter it has to be served." — Heard at Stumptown Coffee "cupping" tasting tour, Portland, OR

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By Azure
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Noodles, Dumplings, and Bread oh my

For my Field Trips in Food class we are visiting food manufacturers in New York City. As you might expect there aren't many of them anymore. Exorbitant rents, trouble finding space that will suit for food production, gentrification, and neighbor complaints are only a few problems that existing and aspiring food producers encounter in trying to start, remain, or expand business. I am very impressed by the determination of these entrepreneurs to not only increase their business but to remain in New York City.

The first place we visited was Twin Marquis on January 27th. They have several lines of noodles and dumplings that they sell to both wholesale and retail clients under several brand names. <http://www.twinmarquis.com/> This might have been one of the best field trips I've ever been on. Watching how the different noodles and dumplings were made was fascinating. The people giving us the tour were very nice, very informed, and good enough to answer all of our crazy questions as best they could. The wide array of products was impressive. They produce a huge number of noodles, wrappers, dim sum, and dumplings in a variety of ways, some are even all natural. They were also extremely generous with both their time and products, we got to try dumplings, they gave us wonton wrappers to take home experiment with, and even allowed us to try a product that's not in stores yet. **TMI** is working in conjunction with Bruce Cost, an authority on Asian food to produce a new line of ginger ales. We were able to try these new drinks and I have to say wow I mean wow. I have tried a lot of ginger sodas, I enjoy them, and do like a few but often they don't taste very fresh. These not only taste incredibly fresh but have small pieces of ginger floating in them. They come in three flavors: Original, Jasmine tea, and Pomegranate with Hibiscus. Sadly they are not available for sale yet, but hopefully soon will be in Whole Foods stores. I can't wait, I've only had two bottles but I think I'm addicted. I can have my soda fix but not feel bad about it.

Our second field trip was on February 3rd to Amy's Bread. <http://www.amysbread.com/> Amy's currently has several locations, we visited the main bread production location in the Chelsea Market. Our tour guide was Amy herself, taking time out of her super busy week to talk to us. The first thing I noticed when we entered was that wonderful aroma of bread rising and baking, it was intoxicating. We were able to see the mixing room, the bread rising, baking, and cooling. I can definitely say that by the end I could not wait to try some bread. They offer a variety of products, not just bread. The sweet treats that are produced in the Hell's Kitchen location are sold at all three stores and are definitely worth a try. The applesauce donut is moist, not too sweet, and slightly chewy. The brioche dinner rolls are soft but not squishy and have that wonderful buttery quality of good brioche. I tried one of their sandwich rolls, potato onion dill, which is also available in loaf form is wonderful. I thought the dill would be overwhelming and possibly annoying but it was subtle and added great flavor. I think I will be having to return to try other flavors and enjoy the ones I tried again.

I will post about further adventures as they happen.

March 2010

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By Azure
1 Comment
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Awesome Roast Chicken

For many people there are three components to the ubiquitous comfort meal. Roast chicken, mashed potatoes, and some sort of vegetable. There is debate over which is more important the chicken or the potatoes. I think both are equally important to creating the perfect balance. Unfortunately this post will only cover the chicken side of the equation. Mashed potatoes will be addressed in another post.

People seem to think that making roast chicken is really difficult, too many steps, easily overcooked, and coming out dry and inedible. This just isn't true. This is by far the best roast chicken I have ever had let alone made, and it is super easy to make.

What you'll need:

1 whole good chicken- organic if you'd like, you're looking for one in the 4 pound



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Wow Bao/Big Bowl Ginger Ale

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Author

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LAZ

Post subject: Wow Bao/Big Bowl Ginger Ale

Posted: Tue Dec 15, 2009 3:02 pm

[offline](#)

Joined: Thu May 27, 2004 4:51 pm
Posts: 3517
Location: The Land Beyond O'Hare



I'm a huge fan of this ginger ale mixed from fresh ginger and cane sugar, so I was thrilled to hear that it's now available in bottles at retail: [Good news for ginger ale lovers](#)

Not so thrilled about the price, though: \$2.99 per bottle at foodlife and \$8.89 per four-pack from Peapod. That's in line with the price at the restaurants, I guess, but pricey for a bottled soda. Given how they make the stuff, I don't see it coming down much as they get more distribution.

LAZ

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Specialty Sodas Perk Up Beverage Menus

Specialty sodas help operators extend their brand messages to beverage menus.

By Leah A. Zeldes, Special to R&I -- Restaurants & Institutions, January 1, 2010

A handful of fountain sodas—cola, diet cola, a lemon-lime drink and perhaps root beer—is the extent of the soft-drink list on most menus. Not so at S'MAC in New York City, where owner Sarita Ekya boosts beverage offerings with organically sweetened sodas and bottled all-natural juice spritzers.

"Specialty sodas span such a diverse customer range," Ekya says. "I am surprised more people don't offer them." Operators can easily whip up unique house-made sodas by mixing flavored syrups and other ingredients with carbonated water supplied by soda guns or made in soda siphons. For those without the equipment or inclination to make their own sodas, recently introduced fountain modules can dispense as many as 50 kinds of pop, and the variety and availability of interesting bottled sodas is on the rise, too. Funky flavors appearing on innovative menus include persimmon, vanilla bean, rhubarb, kumquat and juniper berry.

"Menus offer such creative food dishes, but beverages stay the same," Ekya says. "People are ready to mix it up."

A Taste of Home

Regional sodas can bolster a concept's authenticity on the beverage side. Pie Town Pizza, a Chicago-style pizza parlor in the Las Vegas suburb of Henderson, Nev., takes inspiration from the Windy City for its drink menu too, serving a bright-green, lime-flavored fountain soda brewed in Chicago as well as a selection of flavors from a small, independent bottler from Chicago's South Side.

Mercadito, a small chain of cantinas with locations in New York, Miami and Chicago, serves Mexican-style sodas in exotic flavors such as tamarind and hibiscus and imported Latin versions of big-name cola brands. Many Jewish delicatessens carry canned celery, black-cherry and cream sodas that originated in New York City, and nationwide, a number of South Asian eateries, among them Kasa in San Francisco and Shalimar in Austin, Texas, offer a lemon-lime beverage with a hint of ginger that evokes home to Indian expatriates and gives others a sense of place. Harkening to another time, Che Sara Sara Café at Omni Bedford Springs Resort in Bedford, Pa., pours an old-fashioned draft root beer and a sells a line of classic sodas that originated in 1924. The old-time soft drinks tie into the resort's celebration of its heritage, says Scott Stuckey, the resort's general manager. "They are an extension of this journey back in time," he says.



House-mixed cherry sodas are a signature at DMK Burger Bar in Chicago.



Big Bowl's ginger ale
House-made ginger ale is a big seller for Wow Bao and Big Bowl.

Fresh & Bubbly

When Stanford Hospital in Palo Alto, Calif., introduced its Farm Fresh inpatient menu, it only followed that items such as soups made with local, organic ingredients and meatballs featuring grass-fed beef would be accompanied by beverage choices such as bottled organic ginger ale sweetened with evaporated cane juice (a less-processed alternative to refined sugar). "Everything on the tray is organic," says Executive Chef Beni Velazquez. Making sodas in-house appealed to Karen Adelman and Peter Levitt, owners of Saul's Delicatessen & Restaurant in Berkeley, Calif., for environmental reasons: On-site production means less bottle and can waste and a lower carbon footprint for the operation, given that it isn't shipping in sodas from national vendors. Plus, because Saul's doesn't use high-fructose corn syrup in its sodas, the restaurant reduces its reliance on commodity crops. The drinks taste better, too, Adelman says. The deli makes its own ginger ale as well as sodas in flavors such as cream and cardamom; seasonal varieties include strawberry, cherry, blood orange and Meyer lemon. (For more on making flavored sodas, see "Soda Made Simple" sidebar below.)

House-made sodas also are in keeping with the locally focused menu at Lincoln Restaurant in Portland, Ore., where rotating choices have included persimmon, cherry, mint and rhubarb.

"It's a little more interesting, and ingredient-driven sodas are very food-friendly," says owner David Welch. Guests who don't drink alcohol also appreciate that the restaurant offers flavorful alternative drinks, he adds.

Tapping Expanded Audiences

Teetotalers aren't the only ones happy to see a wide selection of soda options. David Puopolo, owner of Soda Pop's, a new Los Angeles sandwich-and-salad spot, says offbeat soda has broad appeal. He offers 15 to 25 bottled brands from across the country. "I'm finding out [for example, that] there's a connoisseur clientele who really know their root beers," he says.

Flavored sodas can add a kid-friendly element to beverage menus, says Chef-owner Michael Komick, who menus a signature cherry soda at his recently opened DMK Burger Bar in Chicago. For grownups, they also make unique mixers. "They're pretty cool to use in cocktails," says Paul Tanguay, beverage consultant to Mercadito, which serves drinks such as the *Chicas Fuertes*, made with tequila, lime juice, Mexican grapefruit soda and epazote.

At Chicago-based Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises' Wow Bao and Big Bowl concepts, house-made ginger ale is mixed to order using ginger-infused simple syrup combined with carbonated water and fresh lemon. The restaurants also make ginger ale in jasmine-green-tea and pomegranate flavors. The drinks have become so popular that Chef-partner Bruce Cost has begun bottling them to sell from coolers near the host stands.

Profitability Pros and Cons

Profit margins on bottled sodas are markedly lower than those on fountain drinks, says S'MAC's Ekya. "However, as a business owner, you need to provide what matches your food the best," she says.

Some operations, such as Mercadito, upcharge for bottled beverages, while others absorb the difference. "There are additional fees that we pay for these beverages due to availability and shipping," says Stuckey, but the resort still prices specialty sodas in line with other soft drinks.

Adelman says it's less expensive to make soda in-house than it is to buy the bottled and canned celery, black-cherry and cream sodas that Saul's used to offer. On the first glass, Saul's charges the same price for its house-made drinks as for standard fountain beverages, but customers pay for refills on specialty sodas.

At Lincoln Restaurant, house-made sodas help pare costs by repurposing ingredients that would otherwise go to waste. Chefs might use fresh persimmons