

# Q, R, S, TEETOTAL

Anyone for some kefir water? What students choose to drink these days is changing and we can't presume they will always want a cold beer. Check out these soft drink trends for your growing teetotal customer base

WORDS BY MORAG WILSON

Students come to university to study, or so they tell us. We know they still like to socialise but we also know that they are drinking less and so it's up to universities and colleges to up their game and offer a choice of soft drinks that extends beyond the familiar.

The TUCO Student Eating & Drinking Habits Report 2018 tells us that 17% of students never drink alcohol, yet they still want to socialise and have a good time (and we want them to be spending money on campus). The TUCO Hosiobable Campus report also highlights the importance of inclusivity and providing a space for all types of student.

Don't let your bar exclude non-drinkers. In fact, let it be a place that welcomes them with open arms.

## MIMIC THE BOOZE

One tack to take is replicating alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic ones. Cocktails are a growing trend among young drinkers, so make sure there's an equally appealing mocktail menu so groups can socialise on the same level.

"It's a bit of win-win for operators; mocktails can be sold at a higher margin than cocktails and the perceived value of this creativity is higher than a basic mixed orange and lemonade," says Jessica Waller, head of brand at Frobishers. The company has a series of mocktail recipes for operators to create long drinks using juices and cordials they already have in stock.

And if you're feeling adventurous, the TUCO Global Food & Beverage Trends Report suggests using shrubs and fermented ingredients as a mocktail base.

Remember, if you are serving more non-alcoholic drinks in the bar, particularly if they're mocktails, then focus on the serve. Students will feel much more included if their drink looks as good as an alcoholic one.

"The serve as well as the drink itself needs to be desirable," says Maria Lawrence, operations manager for Funnybones Foodservice. "This does not mean filling a juice drink with a fruit salad, but creating elegant, sophisticated non-alcoholic options that make the customer feel special."

Looking back to the TUCO Global Food & Beverage Trends Report, it highlights the use of edible flowers, vegetables and fruit as a garnish to drinks.



DREED FOODSERVICE



FROBISHERS



VINTO OUT OF HOME

#### TREND-SETTING

In recent years the soft drinks market has been flooded with premium drinks that are a world away from the typical fizzy pop that once was all you could get in the pub. Just look at Radnor Hills' Heartsease Farm brand, which taps into the growing audience for non-alcoholic premium drinks that taste just as good and look just as appealing as alcoholic beverages.

Cold brew tea is another great addition to have on the bar and – because it is sugar-free – customers can enjoy hanging out with their friends yet still make the healthier choice.

"It has no calories and contains all the well-known health benefits of tea; it is excellent for quenching thirst and hydrating the body, as such it's perceived as an ideal drink for 'grown-ups'," says Allan Pirret, sales director of Novus Tea.

It's also dead easy to make as there's no extra stock to buy as you can use teas already on the hot beverage menu and existing equipment.

For something completely different, tap into the trend for slush, which is coming out of the swimming pools and theme parks and into more adult arenas.

"A key way to jazz up your drinks offering is through adding unusual, adventurous flavours or textures that provide an experience," says Emma Hunt, marketing director at Vinto Out of Home. "Frozen drinks are the perfect way to do this – after all, there's no sensation like slush!"

All of these are drinks that just wouldn't be consumed at home and that's the point – creating an offer in the bar that students can't find anywhere else.

"In the main, students are looking for soft drinks and non-alcoholic beverages that provide something different to those that they would regularly consume at home," says Neil Lunn, UK trade marketing manager for Supermalt UK. Beverages such as Supermalt work in bars because they are ready-to-drink and therefore quick and simple to serve, and are totally different to anything that would be drunk at home. What's more, it's non-alcoholic, caffeine-free and has added B vitamins. There's a 30% less sugar variety too.

#### SOFT DRINKS TUCO FRAMEWORK

The Soft Drinks and Associated Products framework agreement started on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 and runs until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020, with the option to extend until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

##### There are five lots in the framework:

- Lot 1: Carbonated soft drinks
- Lot 2: Still soft drinks
- Lot 3: Sports, health and energy
- Lot 4: Bottled water
- Lot 5: Concentrated juice and dispensers

##### Awarded suppliers are:

- A&B Barr
- Bestway Wholesale
- Bewley's
- Bidfood
- Brakes
- Catering Services (Supplies) Ltd
- Coca-Cola European Partners
- Janes Beverages Foodservice Ltd
- Krogab UK Ltd
- Lucozade Ribena Suntory
- M&S Catering Supplies Ltd
- Tchibo Coffee International Ltd

For more information about the framework, contact mandy.johnston@tucos.ac.uk



JESTIC FOODSERVICE EQUIPMENT



JESTIC FOODSERVICE EQUIPMENT



### JUICE YOUR WAY TO 5-A-DAY

Juicing is no longer reserved for the sports bar. Exempt from the sugar tax, it's a great way to get your five-a-day in – including vegetables – and on-demand juicing avoids those sugars breaking down.

With a juicer on the back bar, university bars can change their menus regularly because all they need is fresh ingredients.

"If a site wanted to create a vibrant apple and ginger juice or a sweet lychee and strawberry smoothie for the summer months, or a soft drink made from autumnal fruits such as berries and hedgerow fruits it is quick and easy to do," says Michael Eyre, culinary director at Jestic Foodservice Equipment.

Troy Smith, managing director of Oranka Juice Solutions, has observed the shift towards 'super shot' smoothies, which often feature super foods like spinach and kale.

"Cleverly packaged in smaller bottles, these are marketed as an instant healthy energy boost and often reflect a more premium price."

Along with this trend is the desire for detox drinks and Smith recommends using ingredients like ginger, turmeric and matcha for juice with a kick.

### HEALTHY HYDRATION

One thing that's really key to remember is that not only are fewer students drinking alcohol, but they're also looking for healthier drinks. The Global Food & Beverage Trends Report lists kombucha and kefir water as flavours to look for in the trend for 'digestive wellness'.

How does that work in practice? The Soft Drinks Industry Levy certainly helps. By adding a tax to higher sugar drinks, students are becoming more aware of the sugar contents of the drinks they are choosing. Within the Coca-Cola European Partners portfolio, only original Coca-Cola is subject to the sugar tax, while even Barr Soft Drinks' IRN-BRU comes under the levy.

As Carl Andrews, managing director of M&S Catering Supplies Ltd, has observed, since the sugar tax, students are now "more likely to choose low-sugar carbonated drinks", now there is a much greater choice of fruit drinks, water and milk-based products, he notes.



TWININGS

## THE WATER OBSESSION

How can we be so obsessed with water? The first drink available on Earth and yet we love it more than ever. There was a time when walking around with a bottle of water was the trendy thing to do but ever since the single-use packaging issue arose, students don't really want to be seen with a plastic bottle in hand.

There's a key opportunity here. Universities can provide branded reusable water bottles and offer free water refills around campus, or you could finally invest in a water filtration system.

And as more students carry around reusable water bottles there are ways to make some sales. Cold In Fuse from Twinings is a fruity infusion cold-brewed in still or sparkling water that is all natural with no sugar and is low in calories.

"It's not always easy to find interesting alternatives to water that offer the same hydrating benefits and aren't full of sugar or artificial sweeteners," says Jacqui Chapman, shopper marketing manager at Twinings Foodservice. "Offering an exciting and innovative product like Cold In Fuse within a university environment not only encourages students to drink more water throughout the day, but it also makes it easier to attain the recommended consumption of two litres per day which we are all often guilty of not achieving."

Built-in water filtration systems can also help to encourage people to move away from buying as much bottled water as they currently do.

Adam Lenton, marketing manager for EauVation, explains: "A lot of students will choose bottled water over tap, even despite the backdrop of environmental concerns with plastic and this is mainly due to a combination of reasons, one being taste – tap

water can vary in taste and palatability and some have concerns over impurities; another is brand loyalty – they will stick to the water they like best; thirdly, the availability and accessibility to fresh water isn't always there."

A filtered water system provides water of a quality that is on a par with bottled, yet it will boost a university's sustainability credentials, stresses Lenton.

If offering greater choice is the focus, then try offering other water products just like milk alternatives.

"While students are aware of the importance of water, they may be less familiar with the other good things such as minerals and vitamins that a healthy drink can bring them," explains Marja Lawrence, operations manager for Funnybones Foodservice.

"Coconut water for example contains virtually no fat, is naturally rich in vitamins and minerals and helps to aid hydration and quench thirst. Compared to fruit juice, which can contain an average of 9.3g of sugar per 100ml, coconut water contains less sugar yet has almost double the potassium of energy drinks."

"Aloe vera too offers hydration with lots of healthy extras as a bonus," Lawrence adds.

Functional water, meanwhile, is a trend on the up and something that Radnor Hills has explored with its new Radnor+ Energy range. "The energy market is in growth but is dominated by high-sugar options, so we wanted to create the ultimate energy drink, with natural caffeine and zero sugar. Radnor+ Energy is aimed at on-the-go consumers wanting fast hydration with a convenient energy boost," explains Radnor Hills sales director Chris Sanders.

# 17%

of students never  
drink alcohol  
(TUUCO Student Eating & Drinking  
Habits Report 2018)

# 68%

of adults would choose a  
healthier alternative to a  
soft drink if available  
(Twins)

# 66%

of students regularly drink  
water at lunchtime  
(TUUCO Student Eating & Drinking  
Habits Report 2018)

# 1 IN 5

under-25s say they are  
serious and one-third  
say they're actively trying  
to reduce their alcohol  
intake  
(Office for National Statistics)

# 85%

of soft drink consumers  
like to try new or  
different drinks when  
they're out  
(ICCA BrandTrack)

But of course, drinking healthily ties in with the wider drive by young adults towards greater health and wellbeing more generally in the food they eat too, whether that's cooking for themselves or living in catered halls.

"Healthy hydration is key to our success in providing beverages which meet the demands of caterers and students in catered halls of residence," explains Stephen James, director at James Beverages. "We have pioneered the introduction of zero- and low-sugar alternatives to the juice options generally presented for breakfast and evening meal consumption."

Students are generally considered to be the most health conscious demographic around, so universities and colleges really should be pioneering the way, with the help of established and emerging brands. And students being students, it's worth taking a few experimental risks with your soft drinks range - you might be surprised at how well they go down.

"With 20% of people now teetotal in the UK, and up to 30% in the 16- to 24-year age range having never drunk alcohol, there's a real opportunity to target university students with more unusual soft drinks," says Tom Workman, commercial trader for drinks at Creed Foodservice.

It hasn't gone unnoticed by the top brands either. Barr Soft Drinks has unveiled a new approach to managing the soft drinks offering, with three key drivers that it believes will be a major contributor to category growth.

"The three drivers - Health & Wellbeing, Taste & Fun and Lifestyle & Culture - reflect changing consumer lifestyles, influences and needs in relation to buying and consuming soft drinks," says Adrian Troy, marketing director for Barr Soft Drinks. The company has used the three category drivers to develop a blueprint for the future of soft drinks merchandising in the UK.

Traditional soft drinks will always have a place and brand loyalty is particularly strong when it comes to big soft drink brands. But, as Haleem Sadiq, trading controller for impulse at Bestway Wholesale, notes, it's about offering choice and signposting the healthier options.

"Give students the choice and stock a range of options, clearly highlight healthier and low-sugar options for those who are health conscious," he says. "With every passing month, look at what's selling and what isn't, and base your approach to health-conscious drinks, and their fast-moving trends, around this."

Healthy choices, unusual brands and great taste. That's all you really need.