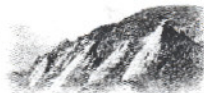


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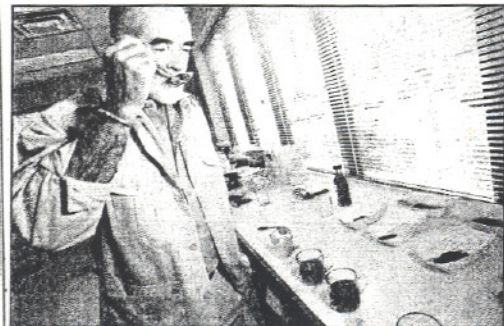
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Monday, July 28, 2003 • 50¢

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MIGRAINES TOO,
DOCTORS SAY



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MARTY CANVAND / Daily Camera

Barry Cooper, founder of the Calico Tea Co., on Tuesday tastes tea blends in his kitchen at Stassen North America, another of his tea businesses. The Boulder businessman has been recruited by 7-Eleven to distribute his all-natural iced tea at 5,300 locations.

Boulder-based ice tea co. goes national

All-natural brew
launches with
7-Eleven, Denver
Rock Bottom

By **Matt Branagh**
Camera Business Writer

It was the rhythm of a tea estate that captivated Barry Cooper early in life. Now, the Boulder businessman has created a healthy iced tea he expects will capture the beat of the nation.

Cooper, through his Calico Tea Co., has spent four years perfecting a 100 percent natural iced brew tea that can be dis-

pensed through fountains used at convenience stores and restaurants.

This month, 7-Eleven Inc. unveiled Cooper's concoction nationally, making it available to its 5,300 locations in an attempt to capture a health-conscious, iced-tea loving population.

Chalk up yet another natural drink product with Boulder roots — think Celestial Seasonings teas, Horizon Organic's milks, White Wave Inc.'s Silk soy milks or Izze's carbonated sparkling juices — to hit the national landscape.

"We're the little tea company

is, by far, one of my proudest moments."

Branded as Cooper's Iced Brew Tea, the drink doesn't use additives, sweeteners or preservatives. And the process for making the liquid tea concentrate begins with real tea leaves, not an instant tea, Cooper says.

Eateries have struggled to brew iced teas onsite. It requires skillful attention from employees and risks going bad after sitting for long periods of time.

Cooper's Iced Brew Tea, on the other hand, comes packaged in a box, similar to the way soft drink companies ship flavored syrups for fountains.

nect the box to the fountain. Latch on a water line. Out shoots a blended iced tea. No refined sugars. No chemicals, like the carbonated sodas use.

"There is nothing out there like that," Cooper says, adding he expects it to be a big hit with mothers.

Tea industry groups say roughly 85 percent of the tea consumed in the United States is the iced kind. The Tea Council for the USA, a group Cooper voluntarily chairs, says fountain-dispensed tea generated \$750 million of the \$5 billion tea industry last year.

7-Eleven, long known for Slur-

Ice tea co. goes national

Continued from 1A

pees, Big Gulps and hot dogs rolling on a rotisserie heater, continues shifting to a healthier line-up of products, says John Ryckevic, a category manager for the company's fountain concept.

The convenience store chain added Gatorade sports drinks to its fountain lineup four years ago, and it has been adding new flavors ever since. Other options now include lemonades and entries from the so-called energy drink market.

Iced tea was an obvious opportunity, but fresh-brewed versions proved too problematic for employees to maintain, Ryckevic says.

"This gave us an opportunity with the fountain machine to get as close to an iced brew tea as we could, using a piece of existing equipment," he says.

It's not clear how many of the chain's stores have adopted Cooper's drink, Ryckevic says. Cooper estimates it's already around 3,300.

"That's huge," observes Steve Hoffman, whose Boulder-based consulting firm Compass Natural Marketing serves the "Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability" market.

The exposure is immediate, he says, and gives Cooper the ability to capitalize on the brand built around his name for future products.

How Cooper linked up with 7-Eleven really begins with his childhood.

cattle ranch that bordered a tea estate. The rhythm captured him. The lush green plants stretched along hills, their leaves and buds ready for picking every seven days to help keep the 24-hour operation going.

"I've spent my entire life in tea," says the 58-year-old, a self-professed tea guru.

His career began with Lipton Ltd. in 1965. In 1988, he left the company and came to Boulder to participate in the leveraged buyout of Celestial Seasonings from Kraft Corp.

After four years there, he went out on his own. That eventually turned into Stassen North America, a partnership he formed with a Sri Lankan tea exporter. The Boulder-based venture has quietly become a large private label tea packer, serving Wild Oats Markets Inc., Avon and others. Several other tea-related businesses by Cooper have also emerged.

Through those efforts, Cooper came across 7-Eleven when it needed some work with its hot teas. By 1999, the company

was asking him to create an iced tea product for the fountain. While continuing Stassen North America Co., he created Calico to do just that.

What's next? Expansion.

The privately held Stassen North America, with 12 employees, will move later this year into space it paid \$1.12 million in Louisville to buy. Cooper's other businesses, including Calico, will move as well.

And Cooper's Iced Brew Tea has already won over the Rock Bottom Brewery in Denver. Cooper expects to add more restaurants and stores soon.

"The building blocks are in place," Cooper says. "This thing's got legs on it."

Contact Matt Branaugh at (303) 473-1363 or branaughm@dailycamera.com.