

## Louisville tea co. heaping success

Products sold in 7-Elevens, upscale restaurants, HSN

By Alicia Wallace

Camera Business Writer

Success just keeps on brewing for Barry Cooper.

Nearly two years ago, 7-Eleven took his company's all-natural iced tea national. Shortly after that, his pre-packaged tea pods for filtering machines hit the shelves of retailers such as

### COMING MONDAY

• Boulder's influence on the tea industry continues to widen. **Business Plus** Now, his Louisville-based Cooper Venture Associates — an 18-employee company that includes the Cooper's Tea Co. and Stassen North America divisions — are growing in size, sales and reach.

Cooper's Tea Co.'s bag-in-a-box iced teas, which are served locally at Old Chicago, Walnut Brewery, Rock Bottom Brewery and Flagstaff House, are making their way to more places nationally, including Exxon Mobil convenience stations and Popeyes Chicken & Biscuits restaurants.

Also, a 100 percent white tea will be launched today by An-

ers such as Target and Linens-N-Things.

Plus an 18-employee company that includes the Cooper's Tea Co. and Stassen North America divisions — are growing in size, sales and reach.

## Local tea company keeps it real

Continued from 1E

drew Lessman on Home Shopping Network. Credit for the expansions, Cooper says, should be given to the products.

Cooper's Iced Brew Tea product is unsweetened and contains no additives or preservatives. The SNA tea comes from tea estates in Sri Lanka, where the partner company Stassen Group is based.

"I think 'real' has become a

real meaningful term. "Natural" is almost beginning to lose its name to people," Cooper says. "I truly believe our success is due to the products being real and extraordinary."

The success also is not a fluke, Cooper says. Before the possibility of being carried nationally exists, the products have to survive the test market.

Since November, Popeyes has been testing the iced tea at two Atlanta restaurants, wrote Kirk Waisner, Popeyes' vice

president of menu development, in an e-mail. In the coming months, the tea tests will expand into 16 more in Atlanta, Waisner wrote.

"These very large companies have put us through the ringer in terms of quality control," Cooper says.

But if the tests go well, they can turn into a 7-Eleven success story. And that story is continuing — 7-Eleven liked it so much, Cooper says, it asked for a ready-to-drink product.

"It's a natural extension us," he says. "It's the easiest thing in the world when a customer wants a product."

Contact Camera Business Writer Alicia Wallace at (303) 473-1332 or wallacea@dailycamera.com.

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