

# TAKE FOUR (OR MORE) INGREDIENTS...

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Flavour applications technologist, Darren Staniforth, appeals for greater and more professional use of flavours by brewers.

### BEER IN CRISIS?

Take four ingredients. Malt, water, hops and yeast - that's enough, isn't it? Different varieties and proportions of these ingredients provide all you require to make an infinite number of beers. It's true, that's all you need to make beer. Indeed in Germany, that's all you're permitted to use. But is it enough to sell beer competitively in today's market? Probably not.

With overwhelming expectation put on new product innovation, and the wide choice in drinks now available to the global consumer, beer the world over has taken a severe bashing in terms of image.

Beer is thought to be an old-fashioned drink, which lacks the sophistication of wine, with its society image, and stories of provenance and grape variety. Beer even struggles against cider, spirits, cocktails and 'alcopops', which are widely preferred by

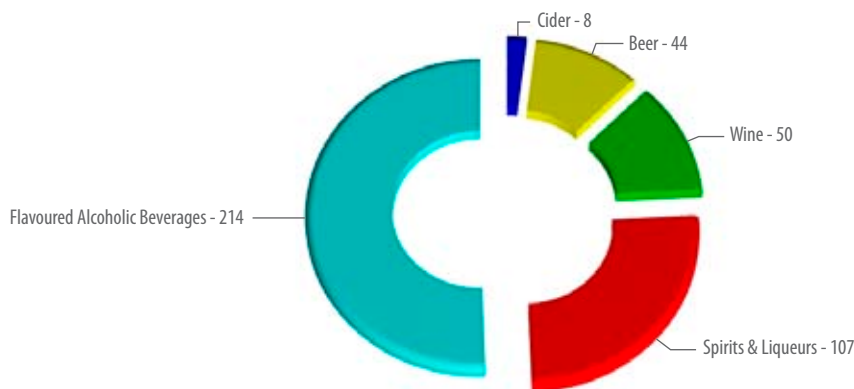
female consumers. It's not even as prevalent in terms of new launches compared with some of its rivals, too.

Attempts to match beer with fine food have not met with widespread appeal outside niche restaurants and trade fairs, and wine continues to dominate at the dining table. Beer is regarded as lacking appeal in the 'here and now'; how many models or aspirational figures do you see endorsing beer?

In a nutshell, for most consumers beer is just not sexy.

Sales figures have not looked too sexy in recent years either. Beer is still produced in huge volumes the world over, but those volumes have been declining in most countries for decades.

According to industry sources (Datamonitor) over the period 2006 to 2011, spirits and wine will be the biggest growth drivers



Top global new product launches by sub-category (Feb 2005 – Feb 2006) (Source: Mintel GNPD)

in the on-trade market. Beer sales are expected to stagnate, while alcopop sales are expected to decrease. Beer is still the dominant on-trade drink, with a 44% share in Europe and 41% share in the US (by volume of pure alcohol). However, Europeans are increasingly choosing to drink wine when they go out. The on-trade share for wine rose to 35% in 2006, driven by sales in northern Europe.

There are some signs that innovation is being attempted with beer in smaller breweries. According to Mintel's GNPD findings, between October and December 2006, seasonal and Christmas-themed beers were the most notable new product launches in the beer sub-category. And it's not quite all doom and gloom, with one sub-sector tending to 'ignore' this decline. The cask ale market. Here the 'heritage' element and the success of micro and regional brewers have seen U.K. sales steadily increase again in recent years.

Unfortunately, the big breweries have to a large extent faced pressures in the market merely by cutting production costs to keep prices low. Even premium beers have had to sell themselves cheaper, in order to keep volumes up. Despite a tag line of "Reassuringly Expensive", one premium beer brand always seems to be reassuringly on special offer in most British supermarkets and off-licences these days!

My enduring affection for beer and brewers makes what I'm about to say quite difficult. But please believe me it comes from the heart. Brewers, and particularly large and medium scale brewers, have got to change to survive. They need to take their blinkers off and start to see what's going on around them. They need to think long and hard about the future, and realise that the tools they need to compete are already available, if only they are prepared to use them properly. And if that means adding

other things to beer, or even using beer as an alcohol source for new drinks, then so be it. As long as brewers insist on tying one hand behind their back by restricting themselves to four ingredients, they will be entering into a losing battle with opponents who have no such self-imposed restrictions.

### CURRENT FLAVOURED BEERS

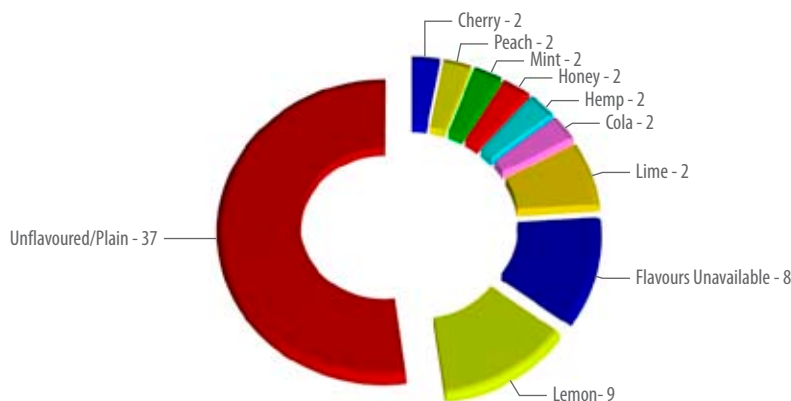
The idea of flavouring beer is not a new one. For the most part it has been the domain of small breweries, but it does not have to be so. Examples can be found in small, medium, and large sizes.

Belgian cherry and raspberry fruit lambics have been niche products for a very long time, but in 1966 Pierre Celis created a Belgian wheat (wit) beer containing coriander seeds and Curaçao orange peel. Today, 'Hoegaarden' is one of InBev's flagship global brands. A more recent arrival, Jacobsen's Bramley Wit, also falls into this flavour category.

In the 1990's London brewery Young's brewed a stout, using chocolate malt. Then they added chocolate to it to make their hugely popular 'Double Chocolate Stout.' Carlsberg's Semper Ardens range followed with a chocolate Criollo Stout.

And it is certainly my impression that the number of honey beers has increased greatly in the last decade.

Not all examples of flavoured beers have been successful though. Quite a few unimaginative bottled variations on the old bar mix of draught lager and lime cordial made by adding citrus flavours, have come and gone. Such products suffered from lack of subtlety and innovative appeal, or perhaps a flavouring expert.



Global top flavours in new beer launches (Feb 2006 – Feb 2007) (Source: Mintel GNPD)





#### ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

One U.K. regional brewer to have taken full advantage of the commercial potential of 'flavoured' beer is Hall and Woodhouse, of Blandford St. Mary, Dorset. With more wins and recognitions in the 'large brewery' category of the Tesco Drinks Awards\* than anyone else, Hall and Woodhouse's innovative flavoured beers are enjoying considerable commercial success. By adding natural extracts to these brews they have recognised the appeal of flavouring beer, and taken a modern approach to obtaining consistency of taste delivery.

The firm was determined to win over the female drinker without alienating their strong male clientele. So they teamed up with flavourings and ingredients specialist Synergy, to come up with a solution to this problem.

After suitable adjustment of the base beer, the underlying floral tones of the hops were subtly complemented with an elderflower extract. The result, 'Golden Champion', has gone on to win numerous other awards since its Tesco Drinks Award success in 1998, and is now listed in all major UK supermarkets and many high street off-licences.

In 2000, Hall and Woodhouse made it to the finals of the Tesco Drinks Awards, with 'Blandford Fly' a ginger accented beer. Then, the following year, they struck gold again, with top spot for peach blossom-flavoured 'Golden Glory'. And if that wasn't enough, Hall and Woodhouse took the

honours for the third time in 2005, with 'England's Gold.' The company combined lager malts with the methodology of ale brewing. Then with a dash of the elderflower extract used for 'Golden Champion' they found themselves yet another winner.

Both 'Golden Champion' and 'Golden Glory' now outsell alcopops to the female market in Hall and Woodhouse's pub estate. These two particular beers have also been successful in overseas markets, not least in Scandinavia.

Hall and Woodhouse is now the leading regional producer of bottled ales in the U.K., with a 10% market share. The 'Badger' brand has doubled in the last seven years, and with a year-on-year growth of +25%, Hall and Woodhouse is also the U.K.'s fastest growing brewer. Who said brewers can't fight back? The key to these successes has been close collaboration between professional flavour specialists and brewers to optimise the beer characteristics with flavour extracts. And it's all natural.

#### BEER AS AN INGREDIENT

I strongly maintain that brewers around the globe, and particularly those from larger breweries, have got to start looking at beer in a different way. Beer is actually a very versatile ingredient; one which offers exciting opportunities to develop other drinks, and even to create new beverage categories. The traditional four ingredients in all their varieties, and the infinite proportions in which they can be combined, give us scope for wonderful bases upon which the influence of



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other ingredients can be brought to bear. The choice is broad: \*\*

- Fruits – cherries, raspberries, peaches, plums, citrus peel
- Spices – coriander, ginger, cinnamon, clove, aniseed, caraway
- Herbs – camomile, heather, bog myrtle, nettles, rosemary, yarrow,
- Others – pine, & pine nuts, chilli, coffee, chocolate, honey, extracts and flavourings

These materials can be used to enhance or even replace one or more of the four beer ingredients, to manipulate profile and functionality. For example, hops haven't always been the main source of added bitterness in beer. From the early Mesopotamian brews, through to the 1400s A.D., other additions served this purpose. More creative brewers are experimenting with both modern and ancient flavours.

With the explosion of interest in herbal medicines, perhaps a return to some of those hop predecessors, might awaken a whole new interest in beer as a 'healthy alternative to wine'? The calming and soporific effects of camomile and hops for instance, or the stimulating effects of ginger, guarana and ginseng, may have special appeal for some consumers.

New beer-based products don't necessarily have to be called 'beer'. Indeed I suggest that it may be wise for new beer-based flavoured drinks to be steered clear of the word beer. Those who don't like beer may be put off, and fundamentalist beer

enthusiasts will disapprove. However, both may try something with a different name.

From my personal experience, especially in the winning beers created by Synergy and Hall and Woodhouse, teamwork was the name of the game, with both companies contributing greatly to the successes. So brewers, take your partners.... 0

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

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#### FOOTNOTES

\* *Tesco, the biggest supermarket chain in the UK, organises annual Summer and Autumn Drinks Awards to breweries and beverage companies alike. Blind tasted by a panel of industry peers, the winners are judged according to appearance, aroma, taste, flavour, aftertaste and overall appeal. Hall and Woodhouse have entered the 'large brewery' category every year since its inauguration in 1998 and were indeed the first winners with 'Golden Champion'.*

\*\* *In his 'Tastings' article for 'Beers of the World' magazine (Issue 8, October/November 2006), Jeff Evans evaluates and describes a number of recent fruit beer offerings.*

#### REFERENCES:

- *The Taste of Beer; Roger Protz; Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1998*
- *Beer; Michael Jackson; Dorling Kindersley, 1998*