



Girl Power

For lunch today I think I'll have a low-carb, high-protein, omega-3 fortified girly sandwich, down it with a vitamin-packed womanly vegetable juice and finish off with an antioxidant-rich chicks-only chocolate cookie. Don't laugh – half the population could be eating that way one day, based on the current trend towards female-friendly nutritional products.

While your first instinct might be to scoff, nutritionally the idea makes sense – offer women products that are customized with the correct balance of vitamins and minerals that our bodies require. The pharmaceutical industry has been doing this for years. And as food production becomes increasingly focused on adding wellness-oriented value, consumers have become more accepting of manufactured products boasting omega-3, vitamins and antioxidant-rich ingredients.

From a marketing perspective, it's a well-established fact that women make a majority of household grocery purchasing decisions (a 2005 Yankelovich MONITOR survey showed that in the U.S. women make 56 per cent of the grocery purchasing decisions, despite not always being the actual shopper). So appealing to this influential portion of the population in terms of packaging, product design and marketing material is nothing new. But this trend goes way beyond flavour or packaging.

According to international research company Mintel, more than 1,000 new food and beverages targeted to women have been launched worldwide in the last four years. Of these products, many are aimed at meeting nutritional needs and boosting energy. Taste profile, packaging, design, marketing and, in some cases, corporate image, all tie in with the female-focused product concept. Energy drinks and bars comprise a significant portion of this category, and Mintel reports that there are already approximately a dozen energy bars on the market worldwide specifically geared to women.

For Clif Bar & Co., a pioneer in the energy bar market, developing the women-only LUNA Bar was a natural progression from its successful sports snack the Clif Bar. Most recently the Berkeley, Calif.-based company expanded its line with Luna Tea Cakes, tea-infused baked snacks containing antioxidants, omega-3 and calcium, and depend-

ing on the variety, designed for mood balance (Vanilla Macadamia), longevity (Berry Pomegranate) or healthy skin (Orange Blossom).

Perhaps it was that success that spurred Coca-Cola to introduce TaB Energy last year, a low-calorie, carbonated energy drink targeted to women. The candy-sweet pink drink has less caffeine than other energy drinks on the market (785 mg of taurine and 95 mg of caffeine per 10.5-oz. can), and, as its tag line says, is designed as "Fuel To Be Fabulous." Interestingly, in Mexico the drink is referred to as Fuelo De Cougara – Cougar Fuel – which says something altogether different about girl power.

By comparison, Go Girl sugar-free energy drink, launched in 2005, contains 1,500 mg of taurine and 150 mg of caffeine per 12-oz can. Described on the company website as a "functional beverage" rather than a thirst-quencher, the drink also targets women with a bright pink can, sweet taste profile and slick

marketing campaign.

Del Monte Foods' new Bloom Energy appeals to a different demographic of female shopper. Although it is also targeted specifically to women, the beverage's energy punch comes in a full serving of fruit, antioxidants, nutrients and naturally caffeinated white tea extract. The 100-calorie juice is available in Wild Berry, Cran Raspberry and Mango Passionfruit flavours, and, says the company, "is nutritionally superior to many other leading energy drinks."

Ultimately, what this trend really represents is the continued strength of consumer demand for products that pack a nutritional wallop. The specialization of energy bars and drinks also shows that the category, like the market for nutritionally enriched products in general, is maturing. Most likely this trend will only increase, especially as energy drinks, according to Mintel, now represent a US\$3.2-billion market south of the border, with that number expected to rise to as much as \$5.9 billion in the next four years. In fact, last year alone more than 200 new energy drinks were launched in the U.S. That means that more women-only foods and beverages are likely to find their way onto retail shelves in the near future. I just hope that someone realizes that women do like other colours than just pink.

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