

The Lite Touch

LABOR-INTENSIVE SKINNY COCKTAILS CAN BECOME A WAIST OF TIME, BUT NOT WHEN MASTER OF MIXES LITE COMES TO THE RESCUE

The number of people who consume low-calorie products has nearly doubled during the past decade, illustrating the growing demand for thin-minded food and beverage alternatives. Master of Mixes Lite is opening new doors for easy-to-prepare, refreshing summer cocktails. THE TASTING PANEL talks to **Theresa Martin**, Marketing Manager for **American Beverage Marketers**, a leading worldwide producer and marketer of liquid cocktail mixes, and creators of the new Lite cocktail mixers from Master of Mixes.

THE TASTING PANEL: What prompted the introduction of the Lite cocktail mixers at this time?

Theresa Martin: We've watched the food side of grocery products explode with low-calorie options over the last several years. In addition, light beer has been a mainstay in the beer category for quite some time. As a company focused exclusively on the cocktail mix category, we realized that a low-calorie cocktail mix offering could expand the category to consumers who typically would shy away from cocktails in general for various health reasons (i.e., calorie content, sugar content, etc.). This anecdotal evidence led us to believe there was a viable market for low-calorie cocktails. We introduced **Margarita Lite** in March of 2010, and its immediate and continued success validated these findings.

Master of Mixes cocktail mixes are premium cocktail mixes that use premium ingredients so if we were going to offer a low-calorie option we wanted to make sure it tasted good. We don't want consumers to try Master of Mixes Lites and walk away with that empty feeling—like

Master of Mixes Lite cocktail mixes are available in three varieties: Margarita, Sweet n' Sour and Strawberry Daiquiri/ Margarita. Each flavor is blended with premium fruit juices, such as California strawberries, Lisbon and Eureka varieties of lemon juice and Key lime juice. The natural fruit sugars are enhanced by the addition of sucralose, America's most popular non-caloric sweetener.



they are missing out—that some low-calorie options leave you with. Each flavor has 20 calories or fewer per serving (Margarita and Sweet 'n Sour has 10; Strawberry has 20) and contains real fruit juice, which is the sole source of the calories in each flavor. We add no sugar and only use a touch of sucralose to lightly sweeten them. However, it's not just sucralose and premium fruit juice that make our Lite mixes taste so comparable to their full-calorie counterparts. After years of research our technical team developed a proprietary blend of ingredients that enhances mouthfeel and flavor delivery. We managed to reduce the calorie content by 89–93% (varies by flavor) and feel very confident consumers will be delighted with the flavor of each product.

TP: Did you have consumer feedback or studies showing this was a niche that needed filling?

TM: The Master of Mixes Lite line was actually preceded by a Lite line in our on-premise brand, *Finest Call*. Several years ago, we were at an on-premise trade conference and there was quite a buzz about low-calorie menu options. Cocktails, traditionally being a high-calorie item, obviously became a point of concern for restaurant chains who were posting menu item calorie contents. In response to this need we developed *Finest Call Lites* in three flavors: **Margarita**, **Sweet 'n Sour** and **Bar Syrup**. We focused heavily on getting the flavor just right, which led us to finding the right balance of real premium fruit juices with a small amount of Splenda [the brand name for sucralose] for a low-calorie cocktail that has great flavor, too.

TP: Was spring/summer release planned because that is the peak season for these products?

TM: Cocktail mix sales definitely peak between Memorial Day and Labor Day, and we take that into account with our retail product launches. The product needs to be in the stores before Memorial Day to take full advantage of the entire summer selling season. We took the top three flavor categories (excluding Bloody Mary) and focused on those items for our initial launch.



Flavor	Traditional	Lite	Calorie Reduction
Margarita	140 Calories	10 Calories/4 oz. serving	93%
Strawberry	177 Calories	20 Calories/5 oz. serving	89%
Sweet 'n Sour	110 Calories	10 Calories/4 oz. serving	91%

TP: Do you have plans for additional flavor launches for fall/winter?

ABM: Not at this time, but we are watching the market and listening to consumer requests.

TP: What made you decide to substitute sucralose for sugar in these products?

TM: In developing our Lite mixes, we tested every low-calorie sweetening option we could find—from reduced



LITE BERRY COOLER

- 1-1/2 oz. berry flavored vodka
- 1 oz. freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 oz. Master of Mixes Strawberry Lite
- Top with Diet Sprite and garnish with lemon half inside glass and fresh berry on top.

overall sugar content to agave nectar to Truvia. In the end, after extensive taste-testing, we settled on sucralose because it provided superior sweetening power with none of the artificial sweetening side effects such as adverse aftertaste. We also took into account how widely accepted it is as a sugar alternative to consumers.

TP: Are these products also marketed to on-premise, and if so have you had bartender feedback about a lack of low-calorie mixers?

TM: Master of Mixes Lites are not marketing to on-premise, but **Finest Call Lites** are.

TP: Are you seeing a trend of more in-home entertaining and positioning these mixes as a way to simplify that?

TM: We have certainly noticed this trend, and Master of Mixes is centered around making in-home entertaining easier. Master of Mixes cocktail mixes are all formulated to be easy to use, typically requiring only the addition of your spirit of choice to create a great-tasting cocktail at home.

TP: Are there any upcoming product rollouts or initiatives that you would like to highlight?

TM: We do have in-store point of sale for our Lite products that includes a shelf talker, bottle necker and case card.

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