

Sipping on Sweet Tea

Jeremiah Weed Sweet Tea Vodka Elevates a Porch Front Classic to New Heights

By Alia Akkam

From New York City's bustling ESPN Zone to Hooters to the trendy W Hotel in downtown New Orleans, bartenders are whipping up cocktails with a new, adventurous spirit, Jeremiah Weed Southern Style Sweet Tea Flavored Vodka.

"When you mix sweet tea vodka with lemonade, it just tastes great. People love the refreshing citrus profile," explains Judd Zusel, Diageo's innovation director.

With solid, targeted positioning, Diageo unveiled Jeremiah Weed in four months, the company's fastest product rollout. "We saw a consumer demand for it," explains Zusel. "Sweet tea has become very popular and many consumer product companies have been introducing half-and-half versions (sweet tea mixed with lemonade) to embrace the trend."

The Jeremiah Weed brand first launched onto the scene in 1976 as a Kentucky-made bourbon liqueur, and quickly became a cult beverage among air force pilots.

Earlier this year the Jeremiah Weed brand name diversified with the launch of its Sweet Tea Vodka, and according to an August IRI report (*volume sales for the four week period ending August 8, 2009*), it's now the industry's #1 selling Sweet Tea vodka. IRI's New Product Tracker*, in a report dated August 8, 2009, also shows Jeremiah Weed as the #4 brand in dollar sales following Jose Cuervo Especial Silver, Captain Morgan Long Island Iced Tea and Smirnoff Tuscan Lemonade. "This little brand that could is off the porch and hunting with the big dogs," Zusel points out.

"We didn't just make the brand up," he continues. "We looked at Jeremiah Weed five years ago, loved the bottle and history and never had anything that we could plug it into—until now."

Southern Roots

So what has given this brand such a powerful platform to click with consumers? According to Zusel: "It definitely has that Southern roots which allow it to travel. It's not just a straight sweet tea drink, so once you mix it with lemonade it becomes a whole new ball game. Right now consumers are just learning about Jeremiah Weed and that it tastes great. Overall there's a broad demographic. When we looked at the competition launching other sweet teas, we wanted a different consumer, males 21-30. We saw this business popping up in the Southeast and we didn't see a lot of brands that were masculine and edgy."

Zusel says consumers are interested in Jeremiah Weed's history, and the rich visuals like a mason jar of sweet tea sitting beside a bottle of Jeremiah Weed in advertising materials reinforces this connection. More importantly, the recipe was developed by those with Southern backgrounds, who are truly steeped in the culture of sweet tea and know



WEED & LEMONADE

Grab a mason jar & fill with ice
Pour in 1.5 oz. of Jeremiah Weed
Sweet Tea Vodka
Add 5 oz. of your favorite lemonade
Grab a porch and enjoy

that a quality liquid, using real cane sugar and fresh brewed tea, is the right recipe.

"On-premise has been a big focus for us. Bartenders love the brand, the logo, the name and the taste," Zusel notes.

Reaching Out

With bartenders nationwide supporting Jeremiah Weed, the brand has a solid foundation. To tap into the important male demographic even further, Zusel knows Jeremiah Weed needs to continue to grow virally. Already, the brand has secured over 8,000 fans on Facebook; "Mr. Weed" regularly tweets; and Zusel personally answers questions fielded from consumers through the website, www.jeremiahweed.com.

Considering the strong success between brand power and entertainment alliances, recent initiatives include: placement in the VIP room of Green Day concerts; a presence as the only sweet tea vodka at the Virgin Mobile FreeFest; and a Jeremiah Weed paint scheme for the NASCAR race at the Charlotte Loews Motor Speedway on October 17th, which will also mark the brand's first television appearance.

"It's a very cool brand that resonates with artists. It's all very organic," Zusel notes. "We're doing things that make sense." ■

THE GROWING WEEDS

Jeremiah Weed Sweet Tea Vodka (70 Proof)

- Original
- Country Peach Flavor
- Bourbon Flavor (*Includes Real Bourbon*)

✱

Jeremiah Weed Half & Half Prepared Cocktail (25.4 proof)

Convenient Premixed Half & Half Ready-to-Go

✱

Jeremiah Weed 100 Proof Bourbon Liqueur

*The Product that Started It All;
An Air Force Pilot Favorite
Since the 1980's*

* For new products scanning less than 50 weeks