

Brewers take notice of alcoholic sodas

Sales of boozy root beers over last 12 months tops \$116M

BY GREG TROTTER
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Americans are drinking less soda — unless it packs a buzz.

The third top-selling craft beer brand in the U.S. in the past 12 months isn't an IPA or a lager. It's a boozy root beer, according to IRI, a Chicago-based market research firm.

The growth of Not Your Father's Root Beer, made by the Small Town Brewery in Wauconda, Illinois, hasn't gone unnoticed by larger brewers. This week, Anheuser-Busch InBev launched its own, called Best Damn Root Beer. And next month, Chicago-based MillerCoors is hoping to stretch the field by releasing Henry's Hard Soda ginger ale and orange soda.

The growth comes at a time when Americans are rejecting nonalcoholic soda — regular and diet — in favor of bottled water and other alternatives considered more healthful. Industry experts and company executives say alcoholic sodas are different because they tap into consumer nostalgia and a new feeling of indulgence.

"There's going to be an explosion of those things

coming out," said Dan Wandel, principal of beverage alcohol client insights at IRI. "Time will tell if it's going to be a fad."

The top nine alcoholic root beers — led by Not Your Father's Root Beer and Coney Island Hard Root Beer — amounted to more than \$116 million in 12 month period ending Nov. 29, according to IRI sales data that did not include liquor stores and Costco.

Most of that was Not Your Father's Root Beer, with more than \$92 million in sales.

MillerCoors plans to stake its claim next month, using its significant marketing muscle. Henry's Hard Ginger Ale and Henry's Hard Orange Soda will be on shelves throughout the U.S. beginning Jan. 1, followed by a national advertising push.

While Henry's Hard Soda is essentially an expansion of the segment now dominated by root beers, Bryan Ferschinger, senior director of innovation for MillerCoors, said it's intended to be different than what's already out there. At 4.2 percent alcohol by volume and with a recommended price of \$8.99 per six-pack, it has less alcohol and a lower



An emptied bottle of Not Your Father's Root Beer, an alcoholic craft ale, is held in Durham. The beverage is flying off the shelves in Maine and now attracting competitors.

SETH KOENIG | BDN

price than Not Your Father's Root Beer, which has 5.9 percent alcohol by volume and a recommended retail price of \$10.99.

Ferschinger said he and his colleagues talked at length about the decline of nonalcoholic soda in the U.S. But he pointed to the growth of the much-smaller craft soda niche and the "underserved" Generation X consumers as signs that hard soda remains "a strong proposition."

It's been a tough decade or so for carbonated soft

drinks, said Linda Montag, senior vice president of Moody's. Schools have banned soda-vending machines; municipalities have debated soda taxes. Consumers worried about high-fructose corn syrup turned to diet soda, only to develop a new wariness of artificial sweeteners.

As a result, companies such as Coca-Cola and PepsiCo have had to diversify their products. Sales volume of carbonated soft drinks is projected to decline in the single digits in 2016, accord-

ing to a recent Moody's report, driven by the rapid drop in diet soda consumption, which fell 7.5 percent in 2014.

The boozy soda rage is distinctly American, said Spiros Malandrakis, a senior industry analyst for Euromonitor International. The closest comparison is the recent popularity of Harry Brompton's London Ice Tea in the U.K.

"Now, the question of whether it's sustainable is open for debate," Malandrakis said.

Farmers

Continued from Page C1

For these toilers of the soil, working in an office setting is a transition. "I am not used to being inside at a desk," said Bachynsky, who sits in a cube fielding inquiries on how to grow plants from customers across the globe.

In past winters she has worked as a snowboard instructor at Sugarloaf. But income on the slopes was even less predictable than Johnny's.

"It's a hard balance, not having any money coming in around Christmas."

Even established agriculturalists have to wear different hats this time of year.

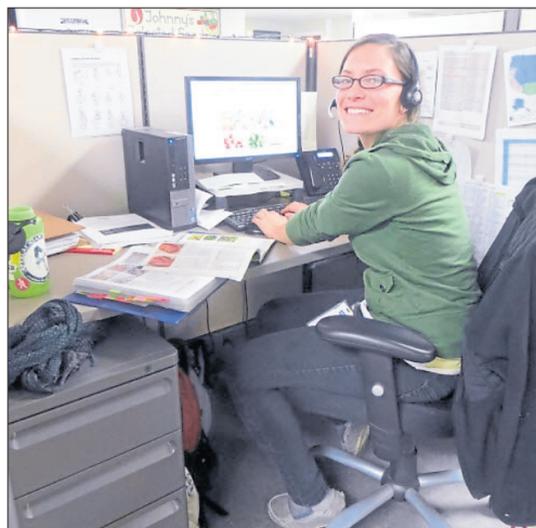
After staying open through last winter, the owner of Highland Avenue Greenhouse, Farm Market and Cafe in Scarborough, has decided to shutter on Christmas Eve and reopen two weeks before Easter.

"It was a bad winter and cost us a lot of money," said Joe Viscone, who equated last winter's low return on investment to "picking up nickels in front of a steamroller."

Three years ago the farmer who has 10 greenhouses (one actively producing greens in the cold months) started a winter CSA offering greens, eggs and baked goods. More than extra income, it "keeps an employee busy without having to lay them off," he said.

Viscone also has a snowplowing, salt and sanding business. Last year's record accumulation kept him busy. So far, no customers this year.

"It's one of those things. You really want snow, but that's stressful too when the calls come in," Viscone said.



COURTESY OF ANDREA BACHYNSKY

In the winter Andrea Bachynsky works in the call center at Johnny's Selected Seeds in Fairfield. The seasonal work helps pay the bills when her fields are put to bed.



COURTESY OF ANDREA BACHYNSKY

In the spring and summer Andrea Bachynsky plants flowers at Honeysuckle Way Farm in Whitefield.

School garden project seeks help

WALDOBORO — The Medomak Middle School Outsiders Club is planning a small raised-bed garden at the school. Organizers are requesting help with the project and ask those who would like to help to donate at SeedMoney.org.

All funds will go directly to the project. To make a donation, go to seedmoney.org/en/projects/26349-Medomak-Middle-School-Garden-Project.

The garden will provide a hands-on learning environment where students in all subject areas can connect classroom concepts with real-world applications. The goal is to use the garden to promote appreciation for the natural world, responsibility to care for the environment and exploration of the food system. In the initial phase, the garden will consist of five 8-by-3-foot raised beds with a small tool shed.

The garden will be utilized by students in the health class, Day Treatment program and an established after-school Outsiders Club. Students will learn sustainable gardening practices.

Teachers and students already are completing small gardening projects such as window gardens. A small herb garden in front of the school would benefit from a larger space. Teachers also have expressed interest in using garden space for lessons in social studies, math and art.

Produce from the garden will be used for schoolwide monthly taste tests in the cafeteria. Students in health class will use produce from the garden to cook with during the nutrition unit, which currently uses produce from local farms. Cafeteria staff are considering the possibility of using produce in the salad bar.

With the classes, taste tests and after-school programs, the school garden will involve all 300 students in the school, as well as faculty, staff and family members.

Bangor Grange farmers market

BANGOR — The Ohio Street Winter Farmers Market will be open 2-6 p.m. every other Wednesday at Bangor Grange Hall, 1192 Ohio St.

The following vendors are expected to participate:

- Farmetta Farm: beef, lamb, chicken and eggs.
 - Island Farm Bakery: soups, baked beans, dips, pizza and oven-ready meals.
 - Leaves and Blooms Greenhouse: yeast breads, baked goods, eggs, vegetables, plants and wreaths.
 - Rollins Orchards: apples, cider, vegetables, milk, dairy products and eggs.
 - The Wholegrain Bake Shop: gluten-free baked goods.
 - Downeast Beads: handmade jewelry and beading supplies.
- For information, call 973-3976.

Market

Continued from Page C1

raised money to help him start the farm in Maine. Waldo County was saturated already with farm stands and community supported agriculture offerings from small, organic farmers. So, Buckle and Hamilton travel more than 200 miles to offer their community supported agriculture share to customers, supply restaurants and sell produce at a farmers market. They don't want to keep the long commute up forever, but for now, it works.

"We really want the farm to be resilient. We want to be away from fossil fuels as much as we can," he said. "We want to keep our Boston connection, but it's a lot on us."

In the growing season they head south on Tuesdays and Saturdays. This winter marks the second year they've brought Christmas trees from Maine, and they found that they ran out of trees so early, they had to get more from a Nova Scotia-based supplier.



COURTESY OF JIM BUCKLE

Buckle Farm advertises in a Boston parking lot.

One Saturday this December, Buckle sold 91 Christmas trees at prices ranging from \$25 to \$90 for a 10-foot tree.

"It is a lot of work, but it's a lot of fun," he said. "With

Christmas trees, it's like you're selling someone happiness. The kids are psyched. And it's one of our last opportunities in the season to say thank you to our customers face to face."

Salt

Continued from Page C1

The salt-making season for them runs from April to October.

"I'm a firm believer in solar-evaporated salt," he said. "It's cost-effective, it's solar, it's renewable

and it's better quality. It has a lot of flavor, and it's not processed. A lot of people have said it reminds them of a swallow of seawater."

Steve Cook said he believes the growing local food movement has brought him a lot of his customers.

"People want to know

ALBUM

Wedding



Stephanie K. Hansen
Joseph A. Tuck

GORHAM - Stephanie Kjelgren Hansen, daughter of David and Mary Hansen of Old Saybrook, Conn., and Joseph Adam Tuck, son of Mark and Suzie Tuck of Bangor, were married on October 24, 2015.

The ceremony was held at The Marriot at Sable Oaks in South Portland with Mark Tuck officiating at the ceremony.

The couple will leave New Orleans for a cruise to the Bahamas in April 2016. The couple reside in Gorham.

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Help knit Hats for the Homeless

BANGOR — Hats for the Homeless Bangor Project is seeking people who knit or crochet to help provide warm hats, mittens and scarves to be distributed to the homeless and less fortunate in Greater Bangor.

Warm items are given to the Bangor Police Department and other assistance agencies. The next deadline for having items ready is Jan 17. For information, email hatsforthehomelessbangor@gmail.com, or sign up at hatsforthehomelessbangor.blogspot.com. Check out the Hats for the Homeless Bangor Facebook page.

PetSmart recalls dog treats possibly tainted with mold

CBS 13

PetSmart issued a voluntary recall of Nutro dog treats from MARS Petcare because of potential mold.

The recall applies to the Nutro Chewy Treats Apple 4 ounces.

The retailer is advising customers to look at the lot code on the bottom of the bag under the best by date.

PetSmart said lots codes beginning with "4 50," "5 02," "5 03" and "5 05" are impacted by the recall.

PetSmart issued this statement on their website: "Please stop feeding this product to your pet and bring any remaining Nutro 4 oz. Apple Chewy Treats affected by this recall to your nearest PetSmart for a full refund. PetSmart sells a wide variety of treats from many brands, and our associates can help you find the right item for you and your pet."

Trader Joe's recalls soda after reports of bottles breaking

CBS 13

Trader Joe's is voluntarily recalling its Triple Ginger Brew, because the unopened glass bottles may be unsafe.

Trader Joe's issued the recall after receiving reports from customers that unopened bottles had shattered or burst.

So far no one has been hurt, but for now all the bottles have been taken off the shelf. The company says the soda itself is still safe.

The recall involves 25.4 ounce bottles of soda with the SKU 51857 sold between Nov. 19 and Dec. 14.

If you have this product at home, you should dispose of it with care in an outside bin and contact the company for a refund. You can call Trader Joe's customer relations department at 626-599-3817.