



# TASTE THIS!

By Francine Cohen

Welcome to our first product showcase. *The Taste This* column is going to be a helpful resource for you to discover products you aren't already familiar with, or find things you've only heard about and have been aching to track down and try.

*Taste This* was originally intended to be a platform for the newest items on the market that are available to the foodservice industry. But, after some deliberation (and recent exposure to some old products that are so interesting and tempting that they have become new favorites of ours and might just become new favorites of yours too), we've decided to make this simply your go-to resource guide for all things delicious.

We welcome your input in the form of introductions to new products and feedback. So let us know if there's something out there we should be trying or if you have any comments (good or bad) on what we're presenting each month. This column is for you.

Since July is our spotlight on beverages we're bringing you three spirits that lifted our spirits when they arrived and we're pretty sure they'll do the same for you.

**First up** is **Square One® Cucumber Flavored Organic Vodka**. Launched in May 2008 this vodka is made from 100-percent organic American rye and organic cucumber with water from a deep Snake River aquifer. For the record, it is kosher, 40% alcohol, and the fermentation process is certified organic certified both by Oregon Tilth, and by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Program (NOP).

Now I know that my mother gives me that certain disapproving look when I start raving about an alcoholic beverage but I'm willing to subject myself to her disapproval when it comes to this vodka because I can not say enough good things about it. First of all, the moment you put it up to your nose you'll swear you're sitting swaddled in a robe at the spa, waiting to be called in for your massage. The cucumber essence is that pure and clean that if you didn't know you were about to sip vodka you'd be pretty sure that it was cucumber flavored water in that glass. Square One Founder and CEO Allison Evanow explains just how she gets that pure essence in a bottle, "There's two ways we are doing it. We send an essence company our organic spirits and they do a micro distillation. We steam distill the cucumbers and get a cucumber essential oil extract and that gives you the amazing flavor. The challenge is

you're getting just the flavor and you've almost burned off the floral top notes. One thing I said to him is 'I need to smell them. I want people to smell it and know that it is cucumber.' Then we do a vapor based distillation. Then they blend the essences and we blend it into our base vodka. We add the essence at the end. We're not infusing."

Evanow created this versatile vodka that can lean either sweet or savory, depending on the preparation. She notes, "It's got the cucumber note and provides versatility in what I like to call a culinary style cocktail. Cucumber is not going to be a hero. So don't think of it like all these recipes are going to taste like a cucumber cocktail. Use it in something else. It's really versatile as you can use it as a spirit on your menu in three different cocktails and it is not like you will have three cucumber cocktails in your menu."

For more information go to [www.squareonevodka.com](http://www.squareonevodka.com).



**VeeV** is another one of those spirits where I'm willing to stretch it and say there might be a bit of a spa connection. Not that I'm touting alcohol as the new health craze (nor are the creators of VeeV, brothers Courtney and Carter Reum), but with the focus on acai in this spirit you can't help but hope you are getting something good out of drinking it. Aside from great tasting cocktails that is.

The brothers Reum (former Wall Streeters who got out at just the right time) launched VeeV in 2007 after a 2003 trip to Brazil inspired them to explore açaí. They note, "We spent the first few years out of school working in finance, but we always knew we wanted to do something entrepreneurial, as well as equal parts progressive and meaningful. We discovered açaí on a surfing trip in 2003 and really loved it, and when we did a little research, we said 'Wow, this is the next big thing.' You see that it has all the attributes of pomegranate, but it's much healthier and has a better back-story from Brazil. We saw that it was about to explode, so that became our keystone ingredient."

This 60 proof liqueur that mixes like vodka fuses açaí with 100% all-natural ingredients and a hand-crafted, column distilled base wheat spirit. VeeV is available through Southern Wine & Spirits in key cities throughout the country- right now that is Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and San Francisco. Additionally, VeeV is committed to preservation of the Brazilian Rainforest and betterment of the environment. The company donates \$1 from every bottle sold to The Sustainable Açaí Project, which VeeV partners on with Sambazon to ensure sustainable and socially responsible harvesting of açaí.

For more information go to [www.veevlife.com](http://www.veevlife.com).



**Far be it** from me to question the sex life of a potato but when the label on the bottle of **Karlsson's GOLD Vodka** indicated that this new vodka (brought to you by the original brains and palate behind Absolut) is made from virgin potatoes I just had to take a second look. And a taste. And I'm glad I did. It's got a great flavor that has a slight peppery edge to it. I understand that my Russian ancestors used to drink their vodka like this with a little pepper in it. So my enjoyment of it must be in my DNA.

But first off, let's get something out of the way...the term virgin potatoes doesn't refer to their pledge of abstinence. A virgin potato is what we'd call a new potato, a potato without a skin. As Swedish vodka has historically been made from potatoes it makes perfect sense that the Swedes would carefully blend a variety of potatoes (seven to be exact) much the same way the world's finest vintners blend their wines. The potatoes which come from Cape Bjäre, a peninsula in Sweden's southernmost province, each offer their own characteristic taste and consistency.

Karlsson's GOLD Vodka launched in September 2007 and, by year's end, should be available throughout the country. This vodka was created by Master Blender Börje Karlsson, known as "the Father of Absolut" for his hand in the creation of one of the world's most successful vodkas. He explains why he endeavored to help create Karlsson's GOLD Vodka and says, "I have always wanted to honor Sweden's vodka heritage by creating a classic potato vodka. Using the finest potatoes from Cape Bjäre, I have been able honor both my homeland's vodka heritage and that of its superb potato farmers."



For more information go to [www.karlssonsvodka.com](http://www.karlssonsvodka.com).

