

Soda

by
Mike Prero

The origins of soft drinks lie in the development of fruit-flavored drinks. In the medieval Middle East, a variety of fruit-flavored soft drinks were widely drunk, such as sharbat, and were often sweetened with ingredients such as sugar, syrup and honey. Other common ingredients included lemon, apple, pomegranate, tamarind, jujube, sumac, musk, mint and ice. Middle Eastern drinks later became popular in medieval Europe, where the word "syrup" was derived from Arabic. In Tudor England, 'water imperial' was widely drunk; it was a sweetened drink with lemon flavor and containing cream of tartar. 'Manays Cryste' was a sweetened cordial flavored with rosewater, violets or cinnamon.

Another early type of soft drink was lemonade, made of water and lemon juice sweetened with honey, but without carbonated water. The Compagnie des Limonadiers of Paris was granted a monopoly for the sale of lemonade soft drinks in 1676. Vendors carried tanks of lemonade on their backs and dispensed cups of the soft drink to Parisians.

In 1767, Englishman Joseph Priestley first discovered a method of infusing water with carbon dioxide to make carbonated water when he suspended a bowl of distilled water above a beer vat at a local brewery in Leeds, England. His invention of carbonated water (also known as soda water) is the major and defining component of most soft drinks.

It was not long before flavoring was combined with carbonated water. The earliest reference to carbonated ginger beer is in a *Practical Treatise on Brewing*, published in 1809. The drinking of either natural or artificial mineral water was considered at the time to be a healthy practice, and was promoted by advocates of temperance. Pharmacists selling mineral waters began to add herbs and chemicals to unflavored mineral water. They used birch bark, dandelion, sarsaparilla, fruit extracts, and other substances. Flavorings were also added to improve the taste.



Soft drinks soon outgrew their origins in the medical world and became a widely consumed product, available cheaply for the masses. By the 1840s, there were more than fifty soft drink manufacturers – an increase from just ten in the previous decade. Carbonated lemonade was widely available in British refreshment stalls in 1833, and in 1845, R. White's Lemonade went on sale in the UK. For the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, Schweppes was designated the official drink supplier and sold over a million bottles of lemonade, ginger beer, Seltzer water and soda-water. There was a Schweppes soda water fountain, situated directly at the entrance to the exhibition.

A persistent problem was the lack of an effective sealing of the bottles. Carbonated drink bottles are under great pressure from the gas, so inventors tried to find the best way to prevent the carbon dioxide or bubbles from escaping. The bottles could also explode. Hiram Codd, in London in 1870, devised a patented bottling machine. His Codd-neck bottle was designed to enclose a marble and a rubber washer in the neck. The bottles were filled upside down, and pressure of the gas in the bottle forced the marble against the washer, sealing in the carbonation. The bottle was pinched into a special shape to provide a chamber into which the marble was pushed to open the bottle. This prevented the marble from blocking the neck as the drink was poured.

In America, soda fountains were initially more popular, and many Americans frequented the soda fountain daily. Beginning in 1806, Yale University chemistry professor Benjamin Silliman sold soda waters in New Haven, Connecticut. Businessmen in Philadelphia and New York City also began selling soda water in the early 19th century. In the 1830s, John Matthews of New York City and John Lippincott of Philadelphia began manufacturing soda fountains. Both men were successful and built large factories. Due to problems in the U.S. glass industry, bottled drinks remained a small portion of the market throughout much of the 19th century.

In the early 20th century, sales of bottled soda increased exponentially, and in the second half of the 20th century, canned soft drinks became an important share of the market. During the 1920s, "Home-Paks" was invented. "Home-Paks" is the familiar six-pack cartons made from cardboard. Vending machines also began to appear in the 1920s. Since then, soft drink vending machines have become increasingly popular.

As of 2014, the top soda-consuming countries per capita were Argentina, the United States, Chile, and Mexico. Developed countries in Europe and elsewhere in the Americas had considerably lower consumption. Annual average consumption in the United States, at 153.5 liters, was about twice that in the United Kingdom (77.7) or Canada (85.3).

In March 2013, New York City's mayor Michael Bloomberg proposed to ban the sale of non-diet soft drinks larger than 16 ounces, except in convenience stores and supermarkets. A lawsuit against the ban was upheld by a state judge, who voiced concerns that the ban was "fraught with arbitrary and capricious consequences". *[wikipedia]*

For the Soda collector, this category offers a wide variety of older and colorful covers, not to mention the nostalgia. Most, if not all, of us have grown up with our own particular favorites. For me, it was Royal Crown Cola (H-m-m-m-m!) There are even a few DQs and the like to be had here. It's not an easy category, though. One doesn't see them often, and they're swept up by eager collectors as soon as they're spotted. Not surprisingly, Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola are the most common, but Orange Crush has a nice series going for it, as well.

Wayne Eadie, NY had 1,825 of these beauties in his collection as of January 2021.



