

Convenience & Carwash *Canada*

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Gas King Oil Co. Ltd
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CHILL OUT WITH FROZEN BEVERAGES



Sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia: That's the scientific term for brain freeze — a sensation many of us experience when we gulp something ice cold too quickly.

By Meline Beach

Frozen drinks can create this effect, yet we crave and consume these refreshing beverages nonetheless.

As we gear up for the summer season, when frozen drink sales are at their prime, *Convenience & Carwash Canada* takes a look at what's hot in this ice-cold category. There's no time like the present to formulate or fine tune your frozen beverage program for your customers.

Sweet Success

Frozen carbonated beverages (FCB) and frozen uncarbonated beverages (FUB) have stood the test of time and have been available in the C&G channel for decades.

"Frozen beverages are multi-generational," says Natalie Pearson, senior director of marketing at The ICEE Company. "Kids and teens seek unique experiences, while older generations

rely on their memories and share the tradition with younger ones."

While entrenched in the US market, ICEE and its sister product SLUSH PUPPIE, are relatively new to the Canadian market. Mostly available in the Toronto area through a network of distributors, ICEE has plans to extend its product offering to C&G retailers across Canada.

Gas King Oil Co. Ltd., an independent chain of gas stations, carwashes and convenience stores, has been selling slush since the 1980s. In 2010, they rebranded their slush as Williwaw — a derivative of the name Williwaw, which, according to Scott Sibbet, vice president, retail operations at Gas King, means, a sudden violent squall blowing offshore from a mountainous coast. Perhaps fitting for the franchise with operations located throughout southern Alberta, >>



**ICEE advice
for brain
freeze: Drink
slower; put
tongue on
roof of mouth
to have the
freeze effect
go away
faster.**



The frozen lineup from the ICEE company at MacEwen Oil, showcasing ICEE and SLUSH PUPPIE brands.



where temperature fluctuations with extreme drops can set records.

"Williwa is sold at all of our locations, and depending on store size we offer either four or eight barrels," says Sibbet, as each barrel represents one flavour. "We sell significantly more product during the summer months, but have a strong following that purchases Williwa year-round."

"We market our brand through various media, including radio, in-store advertising and social media," says Sibbet, who has branded Wednesdays from May long weekend until Labor Day as Williwa Wednesdays, when all Williwas are sold half price. "This promotion has been very successful, along with our coupon books, which are sold as stocking stuffers, as Halloween treats and to sports teams."

Tom Humphreys, petroleum operations manager at Peninsula Co-op has been selling FCB and FUB "forever" at his 15 stores across southern Vancouver.

"The popularity of both doesn't diminish," says Humphreys, who sources the product directly through wholesalers. "Slush will always be a popular offering."

Judi Saliba, senior sales executive at TFI Food Equipment Solutions Inc. concurs. "The demographics cross generations - people who grew up buying the category age into it and continue to be regular purchasers. That said, the feature flavours are developed with younger (12-18) consumers in mind. Operators near a school can, with the proper placement and price point, enjoy tremendous success with the category."

Apparatus & Accessories

According to Saliba, the Taylor Model 349 FCB machine is a common choice for among C&G retailers.

"With proper preventative maintenance, typical field life is 15 to 18 years of profit generation," says Saliba,

who sells and services across Canada, with the most remote installation taking place in Fort McMurray, Alberta, and, St John's, Newfoundland. "We help our customers with store placement, merchandising accessories, marketing insights and financing programs."

Saliba also notes North American customers in the C&G channel tend to veer right when entering a c-store, so that is usually a good place for any foodservice offering, including frozen beverages.

Core-Mark International represents Jones Soda - a brand well known for using cane sugar for FUB programs. According to Marc Rex, director of fresh/foodservice, entry level costs for a frozen beverage program can range

from \$3,000 for a two-flavour FUB program to \$25,000 to \$30,000 for a four-flavour FCB program. In addition to equipment support, Core-Mark offers free point of sale marketing to help drive sales and optimize in-store experience, including training, maintenance and merchandising.

ICEE is confident that an entry-level frozen beverage program can see a return on investment within one to two years of its launch. That's not bad profit potential for roughly 17 inches of counter space.

Branded equipment and accessories, such as dome lids and clear cups, along with a maintenance plan and cleaning schedule can also boost profit potential.

As Humphreys advises:

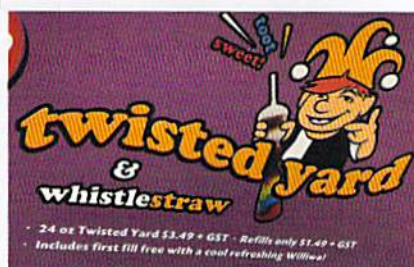
"Staff should clean and service the area frequently during busy times, as a large pack of customers can trash the area very quickly and the product easily sticks to the floor." He also notes that paper straws are a new trend and "if you are not there yet, you are way behind."

Flavour Fortune

Sibbet states: "Generally Coke or Pepsi flavours are best sellers. We have three different sizes available - the best value



"Williwa is sold at all of our locations, and depending on store size we offer either four or eight barrels," says Sibbet, as each barrel represents one flavour.



is our 32 oz., however the best-selling size is 24 oz."

While Humphreys agrees that soft drink flavours are popular for FCB, Peninsula Co-op also sells cappuccino and Kool-Aid flavours for FUB, along with orange, grape, and watermelon.

"While kids tend to mix flavours, they're highly critical customers and know if the product is off," says Humphreys. "You need regular scheduled maintenance to ensure the brix (combination of syrup, water and CO2) is correct. Diehard customers

know when your product is off and will go elsewhere." Humphreys also advises retailers should watch the weather forecast in the summer months, when 60 to 80 per cent of its annual sales occur, to ensure enough product is in stock. "Running out of product is a critical error. Don't let your soft drink representative handle that order without consultation, stick your nose in and make sure it's right."

According to Saliba, data illustrates that the more flavours offered, the higher the sales. Proprietary flavours also keep the offer exciting.

And that's exactly what ICEE does – fun flavours and colours like blood orange for Halloween and cherry lime for Christmas, along with whimsical names, such as Minion ICEE Banana, keep the fun in frozen beverages. Add-ons like glitter and popping candy is also an option to enhance loyalty and drive repeat business. [9]

Meline Beach is a Toronto-based communications practitioner and frequent contributor to Convenience & Carwash Canada. In addition to freelance writing, Meline provides communications and public relations support to businesses across Canada. She can be reached at www.mlbcomms.ca.

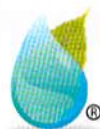
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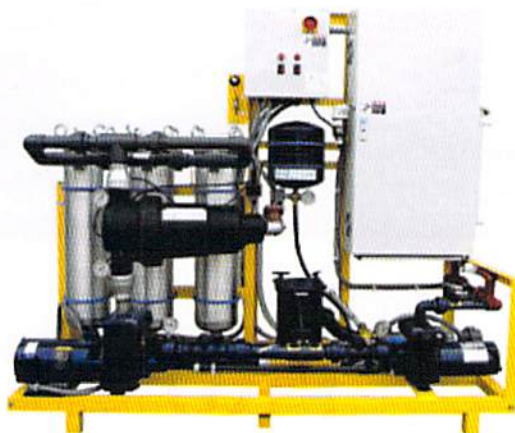


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