

Generation healthy: alcoholic seltzer craze sweeps US

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Cartons of White Claw, Truly and Bon & Viv spiked seltzer are on display at the Round The Clock Deli in New York—the alcoholic beverage is all the rage in the United States

Health-conscious American millennials have found their drink of choice: alcoholic carbonated water that is lower in calories and carbs than beer and wine.

A hard seltzer craze is sweeping the United States as Generations Y and Z pursue healthier lifestyles, influenced by viral trends on Instagram and YouTube.

US sales of the bubbly booze, also called spiked seltzer, have soared almost 200 percent this year compared to 2018, according to research firm Nielsen.

"It has replaced other canned alcoholic drinks for me," says Hannah Stempler, a 25-year-old living and working in New York.

Stempler drinks White Claw, the brand at the forefront of America's beverage fixation this summer.

The company said sales were up over 265 percent on-year at the beginning of September and that it holds 61 percent of [market share](#).

Truly, another brand, saw sales spike 163 percent in Q2, according to Macquarie market research.

From beaches and parks to house parties and boat trips, youngsters were seen drinking White Claw across the Big Apple and other major cities.

Panic even struck this month when shopkeepers and retailers reported shortages and the manufacturer said it was working overtime to keep up with demand.

Stempler, who works in television, told AFP that one of the reasons she drinks it is because she is "health-conscious."

A 12-ounce can of White Claw contains 100 calories and a maximum two grams of carbs. It is also gluten-free.

An average beer, in comparison, usually packs 140 calories and five times the number of carbohydrates.

Beer slowdown

The hard seltzer has five percent alcohol, which comes from fermented sugars. That equals the strength of Budweiser but is considerably less than the 12 percent commonly found in wine.

Alcoholic sparkling water comes in several flavors, including mango and cherry, appealing to customers seeking convenient, ready-to-drink cocktails on the go.

Sanjiv Gajiwala, White Claw's senior vice president of marketing, thinks young consumers are turning to hard seltzers because of their moderate alcohol levels and variety of tastes.

"Millennials are consumers that grew up on 10 different flavors of Gatorade and cuisines from around the world. When they come to the legal drinking age, they are looking for more," he told AFP.

White Claw sales have surged every year since it launched in 2016 but seems to have captured the imagination this summer in part thanks to YouTube influencer Trevor Wallace.

A video of him drinking White Claw has been watched more than 2.5 million times in two months. The clip spawned memes and hashtags that went viral on [social media](#).

The trend for hard seltzers, which include malt beverages, is shaking up the US [alcoholic drinks](#) industry and fueling a slowdown in overall beer sales, analysts say.

Beer manufacturers are rolling out their own seltzers to try to lure customers away from White Claw and Truly.

Anheuser-Busch, which makes Budweiser, has launched Natural Light Seltzer.

Fad?

Aaron White, of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, is pleased youngsters are mindful of what they drink but warns that fewer calories does not mean less alcohol.

He worries that people may consume more alcohol because fruity seltzers don't taste like traditional booze, and is especially concerned by the Four Loko brand's plans to launch a seltzer with 14 percent alcohol by volume.

"The alcohol is the drug. Everything else is just the way it's delivered," White told AFP.

Other types of drinks have been the subject of similar crazes in the past, notably wine coolers in the 1980s and Zima, a malt beverage that was all the rage in the 90s.

Rob Fink, a 29-year-old living in New York, believes

spiked seltzer is here to stay but says it won't usurp beer and other liquor for him.

"There's a time and place for both," he told AFP.

The alcoholic soda industry is worth \$550 million and could grow to \$2.5 billion by 2021, according to a UBS analyst recently quoted by Business Insider.

Gajiwala notes that White Claw has not even reached six percent of American households yet.

"There is a great opportunity for us to continue to grow," he said.

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