

“INKED” and “FRS”

- new energy drinks and collectible cans

By Cecil Munsey

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In the new millennium, one of the things we were promised was food in convenient pill form. But reality cheated our imaginations on every level. Instead of jet packs, we got Segway scooters. Instead of food pills, we got energy drinks.

Packed with caffeine, taurine (a sulfur-containing amino acid important in the metabolism of fats), and B vitamins, energy drinks are the current food of choice for the world's economic machine and collectors of aluminum cans. More energy drinks could mean more hours of productivity and certainly more cans to collect. So as life quickens, the energy drink- and collector-market expands. And frankly, it's getting a little out of hand. With more than **2,000** different energy drinks and cans (and some bottles) on the market, many consumers and collectors believe *“if you've tried or seen one, you've tried and seen 'em all.”*

It all started in Japan, when Taisho Pharmaceuticals released a drink called Lipovitan-D in 1962. It contained a mix of B1, B2 and B6 vitamins, along with niacin and taurine, all of which are metabolic agents intended to boost energy and concentration. “Tonic drinks,” as they were called then, soon grew in popularity in Asia. In 1987, an Austrian named Dietrich Mateschitz took the concept, added caffeine and sugar, and formulated Red Bull, which quickly became popular in Europe and is currently the largest-selling energy drink in the world. Around the same time, Americans were accessorizing their all-night Atari marathons with Jolt Cola, which was advertised as having *“all the sugar and twice the caffeine”* of Coke. And when Red Bull started marketing their drink to American bars as a cocktail mixer, its popularity skyrocketed – and has stayed up there ever since. No serious collector would be without a Red Bull can in the collection.

[References: The history of collecting cans and bottles used for energy drinks began with *“ENERGY DRINK CONTAINERS – Bottles & Cans”* by Cecil Munsey, published starting on page 53 of the Summer 2006 issue of

Bottles and Extras and *“More Energy Drink Containers & ‘Extreme Coffee’”* by Cecil Munsey, published starting on page 45 of the March-April issue of *Bottles and Extras*.]

INKED

The 7-Eleven convenience store chain recently started selling an energy drink called “INKED” in very handsome and collectible aluminum cans (**Figure 1**), aimed at people who either have tattoos or those who want to think of themselves as the tattoo type. The company plans to market the drink at motorcycle rallies and tattoo conventions.

The convenience store chain claims it wanted to create a drink that appealed to men and women. In their mind, the tattoo culture has really become popular with both genders. And according to one executive, *“The rite of tattoo passage isn't only limited to the young, but also to those who think and act young.”*

Ask yourself what does Angelina Jolie have in common with Joseph Stalin and Thomas Edison as well as two out of every five Americans between the ages of 26 and 40? That's right, they all had or have tattoos.

Once seen as a silent cry of rebellion, tattoos now possess a status so firmly mainstream that advertisers are using them to market everything from tires and shoes to wine and, now for your collecting pleasure, the new energy drink in a collectible can, INKED. It comes in two flavors – Maori Citrus (**Figure 1**) and Chikara Tropical Grapefruit.

Maori Citrus flavor was named after natives of New Zealand who have a history of – you guessed it – tattooing. According to the folks running the 7-Eleven company, the tattoo culture was named and brought to Europe by British Navy Captain John Cook. The Chikara Tropical Grapefruit flavor, again, according to the folks running the 7-Eleven company, gets its name from the Chinese character meaning “power” or so they believe. (See sidebar for what could and has gone wrong with Chinese-word tattooing.)

Is it hard to believe that? On a seemingly never-ending quest to appeal to the young and young-minded, companies from Goodyear to Volvo are using tattoos in advertising and promotion. Even wine sellers have adopted the tattoo, with managers of the popular Yellow Tail brand sending 600,000 temporary tattoos out with the October 2007 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine and wine importer Billington Wines taking the name Big Tattoo Wines for its \$10 a bottle brand. Still skeptical? For three years, Goodyear's Dunlop tire unit has offered a set of free tires to anyone who will get the company's flying-D logo tattooed somewhere on their body. Over 100 people have earned a new set of tires – that, of course, won't last as long as the tattoo they received to pay for the tires. At least one “long-distance driver” returned for his third flying-D logo tattoo within a year.

Sidebar: If you add a can of INKED to your energy-drink-can collection, to remove it you simply sell it, give it away or toss it. Removing a tattoo from your body is another thing all together. It is a definite “ouch” to your body as well as your wallet.

The tattoo-removal business is booming (as much as collecting energy drink cans), according to a recent Fox News report. The highlight of the report is dissatisfaction with formerly trendy Chinese-language tattoos that were often either mistranslated as nonsense (“blood and guts” translated as “blood and intestines”) or actual jokes pulled on people too “cool,” or drunk for their own good when they initially get a tattoo (such as Chinese words for “gullible white boy”).

FRS

Energy drinks were recently linked to heart risk. Indeed, a small U.S. study has found a link between the consumption of “energy drinks” and high blood pressure or heart disease risk. The researchers found healthy adults who drank two cans of a popular energy drink a day had above normal blood pressure and heart rate. (The study was presented to the American Heart Association's Scientific Session 2007; it was carried out by Dr. James Kalus, senior manager of Patient Care Services at HenryFord Hospital in Detroit.) To read more about the study go to – <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com>.

Coincidentally, almost as if to offset the results of the above study that found energy drinks potentially harmful, new energy drinks INKED (see previous coverage) and FRS were released in the same month – November, 2007. The difference between the two is that the tattoo-inspired drink is a now-traditional energy drink with lots of caffeine, sugar and the like. FRS (which stands for Free Radical Scavenger) is claimed to be a healthy antioxidant-based energy. The come in five flavors (Figure 2) at \$2.29 for a 11.5-ounce. can. INKED comes in a 12-ounce can and sell for \$1.99.

FRS combines an antioxidant called quercetin with essential vitamins and metabolic enhancers to provide a natural and sustained energy boost, without the crash-and-burn syndrome associated with traditional energy drinks. The product, sweetened with either low-cal sucralose or cane sugar, has a legitimate medical history. FRS was developed by a group of scientists as a means to combat fatigue in patients going through the chemotherapy process.

Just as no serious collector would be without a Red Bull can in a significant collection, it seems safe to assume the same goes for INKED and FRS energy drink cans.

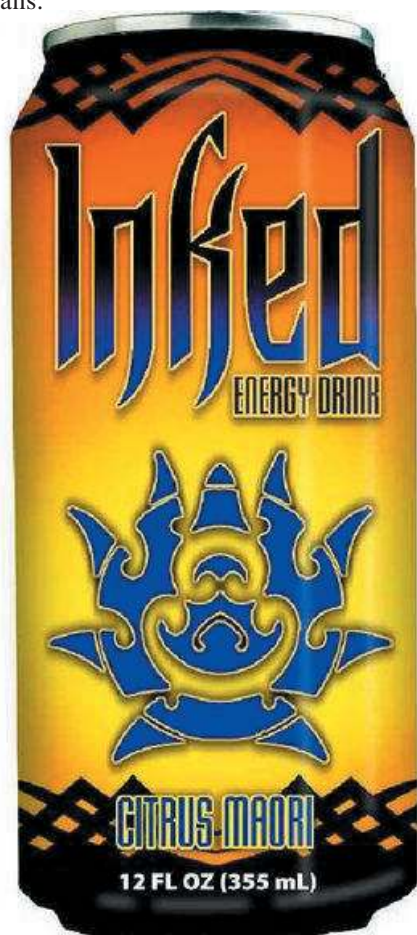


Figure 1



Figure 2

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