

SCIENCE

the Final Frontier?

By Liz Wheeler

REV7 IS GOING WHERE NO GUM HAS GONE BEFORE. **Revolymmer, Inc.**, based out of Wales, England, took a new food-safe polymer created by Terence Cosgrove and has used it as the foundation for a new kind of gum. A chemistry professor at the University of Bristol, Cosgrove's "passion was to create a removable gum. Growing up in London, going to the United States, he was frustrated with gum litter on the streets," said Chris Tamillo, sales and marketing vice president at Revolymmer.

Because of the gum's make-up, the gum can be more easily removed than other gums and will degrade in water. However, the most important aspects for the retail sales market is the way the flavor and consistency of the gum can be maneuvered. "While degradability and removability is really cool, the biggest issues with gum today [is that people] throw gum out because it loses flavor, and it gets hard. With our polymer—we solve both of those issues because we can control the consistency of our polymer," Tamillo said. "All gum gets soft today by temperature. Our gum gets soft by moisture. For that reason we can control the consistency. You can chew our gum for hours on top of hours and our gum won't get hard.

"To extend the chew window, you have to extend the flavor window. Because of the polymer, we can time-release the flavor well past the normal chew time," Tamillo said. While the average chew time of other gum is 15-30 minutes, Rev7 can be chewed comfortably anywhere from 1-3 hours, he said. These facets of the gum are "game changers," Tamillo said, adding that this "technology absolutely will change the gum world forever.

With more than \$30 million already invested, the single largest investment in chewing gum technology in 50 years, the gum is "a first generation product; we continue to make it better.

It's in distribution in 6,000 locations already in just 12 weeks," Tamillo said. "We're far from perfection, but we're head and shoulders above anything else out there."

Revolymmer also makes teeth-whitening nicotine gum and caffeine gum. "Our polymer basically encapsulates [the bitter flavors of nicotine and caffeine] without encapsulation...we mask the flavor so you don't taste it," Tamillo added.

On the flip side, like fashion, what was old is now new again in the realm of gum trends.

Glee Gum, which was around long before the television show of the same name, was created by Deborah Schimberg in a desire to get back to nature and sustainable development. After a trip to Guatemala in the mid-90s, she was intrigued with the idea of making gum that contains chicle in order to create income for the communities of those who harvest chicle from the sapodilla trees.

Schimberg brought back a block of chicle, the original gum base before synthetic resins were created. "My kids had such a fun time making gum" that Schimberg created "make-your-own" kits for gum as a novelty for parents to do with their children while learning about where gum comes from. "People said this is really great gum; why can't we buy it? At that point, there was no gum in natural food stores so we decided to fill that niche," she said.

Glee Gum has a variety of natural flavors and is sweetened with 100 percent xylitol to help avoid gastric distress caused by other sugar alcohols and concerns about sweeteners like aspartame. "Xylitol is expensive, but we have a commitment to making the highest quality and the least dangerous chewing gum possible," Schimberg said. And xylitol "doesn't have any cloying aftertaste. It tastes just like sugar, yet it has a lower glycemic index so it helps rather than potentially hurts your teeth."



"Our company is a bit contrarian, I might say... There is a trend toward increasing scrutiny of the company of the products, of the ingredients, of the manufacturing practices. This is across the board in food, but I think it's happening in gum, too, so we can capitalize on that interest," Schimberg said.

Gum is a "fun and inexpensive treat that shouldn't be harmful."

The trend of having gum be healthier and easier on the waistline also is emphasized by other products hitting the market like **Wrigley's Extra Dessert Delights** gum which has only five calories but tastes like desserts, such as strawberry shortcake, mint chocolate chip ice cream, and key lime pie, somewhat reminiscent of the blueberry pie in Gene Wilder's version of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. Orange Crème Pop and Apple Pie were introduced in September. "Consumers' palates are constantly evolving based on culinary trends," said Jennifer Jackson Luth, who is in marketing communications for William Wrigley Jr. Company.

Jackson Luth also said that fruit flavors have contributed greatly to the growth in gum and candy sales for Wrigley like the Orbit Wildberry Remix which was introduced in July and

JuicyFruit Juicy Riddle coming in December.

The company continues to do research on the benefits of chewing gum through its Wrigley Science Institute.

The resurgence in sales of vintage gum brands also continues.

"It seems that during rough financial times, there is greater emphasis on classic brands that consumers are familiar with," said David Plotnick, marketing director at **Ford Gum & Machine Company**. "Ford Gum's Big League Chew is a nostalgic brand name gum that we are now manufacturing in the U.S.—which gives consumers additional comfort.

"Another trend is the introduction of flavor combinations -being offered by various manufacturers," Plotnick continued. "As in every successful category, there is a great opportunity for new product introductions in offering a known commodity, so there is always emphasis on line extensions in key brands" like holiday packaging and unique pack sizes.

Plotnick also echoed Tammillo's observations that gum companies continue to work on longer-lasting flavors.

Ford Gum makes Mike & Ike, Smarties, Zours and Hot Tamales gum and is a private-label manufacturer for other companies like Glee Gum. **PCB**



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