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Schools want new carbonated milk

09/01/2003

MILFORD, N.Y. (AP) -- Adding bubbles to milk is tricky. Pump in too many, and it foams over. Add too few and why bother.

George and Mary Ann Clark, husband-and-wife entrepreneurs, have spent the past seven years trying to find the balance. Last week, they started production on a carbonated milk-based drink called Refreshing Power Milk -- RPM -- and they already have orders coming in from school districts.

Mary Ann Clark, a registered nurse, said she was pained to see children drinking cola and shunning milk when she worked in schools so she decided to do something about it.

"If you take water and add carbon dioxide to make soda, why can't you do that with milk?" she asked.

She and her biochemist husband started work on a carbonated milk drink in 1996 and founded Mac Farms Inc.

in 1998. The company already sells eMoo, another carbonated milk drink. On Wednesday, in a factory with a barn-red roof and purple-and-yellow cow out front, the first batch of RPM was bottled.

The Clarks combined water and powdered milk to create a slightly fizzy, mildly milky-tasting drink with the nutritional value of skim milk and 40 percent of the recommended daily amount of calcium.

Each 12-ounce serving contains 90 calories and 12 grams of sugar, compared to 150 calories and 40 grams of sugar in a 12-ounce can of Coca-Cola. RPM contains 9 grams of protein compared to none in a can of Coca-Cola, but is higher in sodium: 115 grams to 52 grams per 12-ounce serving.



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The flavors: vanilla cappuccino, Brazilian chocolate and chocolate raspberry.

Researchers at Cornell University had been looking for ways to extend the shelf life of dairy products using carbonation when the researchers teamed up with the Clarks several years ago.

Joe Hotchkiss, chairman of the Department of Food Science at Cornell University, said the drink was designed to attract people who like soda.

"People consume food based on their sensory properties, taste, what kind of emotional feelings it gives them," said Hotchkiss. "Our role is to provide that similar kind of satisfaction in foods, but also couple that to foods that are more nutritionally sound."

On the Web:

Mac Farms Inc.: <http://www.macfarmsinc.com>

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