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# Tastemaker

Like that drink? Kate Niehoff may have been the person who developed it

By Angie Fenton Friedman

Kate Niehoff sees the fruits of her labor. And then she drinks them.

As senior product development specialist for Louisville's Pro-Liquitech International, Niehoff is responsible for scouting out the hottest drink trends and creating beverages for stores around the world.

"I can say, 'I made that. That's mine.'"

Airforce Nutrisoda, a nutrient-enhanced soda packaged in a slick metal can and sold at Target? Developed by Niehoff.

Freeze-A-Rita, a freeze-dried bucket of cocktail mix once sold at Lazarus and Linens & Things? Toast Niehoff as you set out to Margaritaville.

MuscleTech's Extreme Energy Tech drink available at GNC? Formulated by one fabulously fit Niehoff.

Jonesin' for Jones Soda (which is no longer a Pro-Liquitech client, but still...)? The liquid-product princess created the bodacious bevy of flavors.

"In my role, I specifically work with our clients to determine their needs and wants. Then we go into the lab and spend a whole lot of time screening flavors, working with different acid levels to find out what is the best way to achieve our goals," she said. "We do a lot of tasting."

Companies come to Pro-Liquitech to reformulate products already existing or "some give us free reign and a general idea."

Then it's up to Niehoff and her team to create concoctions you, the consumer, will beat the streets to consume.

With a bachelor of science degree from Indiana University and a bachelor of finance degree from the University of Louisville, Niehoff said she always thought she'd go into pharmaceuticals. But after meeting Pro-Liquitech director David Dafoe, Niehoff had a tastier proposal on the table.

"It's a neat way to use the science, the chemistry that I know because there's a lot of chemicals involved in this line of work," she said. "But for me, it's real exciting, because everything we do you can sell, you can touch, people know it."

Once Pro-Liquitech secures a client and there is an agreement of services, Niehoff's team gets to work.

"A lot of times we may go through 20 steps of revision; sometimes we hit it on the first shot."

Once the client is satisfied with Niehoff and her team's formula, the operation phase begins. Niehoff, who said quality



Photo by Matt Stone  
Kate Niehoff is a senior product development specialist at Pro-Liquitech in Louisville. She has taste.



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control is imperative, sets up production formulations and packaging requirements.

"What they put in the cans (must) meet what we made here and our customer signed off on," she explained.

While Pro-Liquitech does not have the capabilities to mass produce, Niehoff is in charge of ensuring the independent companies that takeover large-scale production reproduce the Pro-Liquitech creations exactly.

"I travel quite a bit," she said. "I go to the plant runs and work with the plant."

Niehoff — who somehow fits in time to train for triathlons — is most proud of working on Skaterade, an energy drink that's hit the West Coast and is "coming out and coming out big. MTV has really taken to it."

Also, Niehoff and her team met with "Jay-Z's people" and are in talks to develop flavored vodka extensions of Armadale, a brand owned by Jay-Z and Damon Dash.

Niehoff's eyes flashed when she gestured at the drinks she has developed.

"No day is ever the same. Every client is different; everyone's needs are different. It's just exciting."

We'll drink to that.

*Do you have an unusual job or know someone who does? Send your suggestions to [email@velocityweekly.com](mailto:email@velocityweekly.com).*



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