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50 cents

The Flavor Man

David Dafoe turned his sensory skills into a unique enterprise in Jeffersontown

By JACOB GLASSNER
Contributing Writer

You won't ever find David Dafoe in a candle store.

He can't handle the smell.

Dafoe, 41, has the unique ability to taste and smell things that normal human beings can't, and he has used this ability to create beverages for companies around the world.

Dafoe's company, Pro-Liquitech International, at 10801 Electron Drive in Jeffersontown's Bluegrass Industrial and Research Park, develops everything from soft drinks and energy drinks to dry powdered drinks, juice drinks and alcoholic beverages.

"If anybody has an idea, they can come to us, and we can finish it," said Dafoe, who lives in New Albany, Ind. "We can do all the technical and production work."

Pro-Liquitech, which Dafoe founded in 1992, handles product development, flavor development and process development. Clients have included Chiquita, Jones Soda, Ocean Spray and El Paso Chile Co., but many of his clients are simply individuals with an idea for a beverage.

Recently, Dafoe helped a 23-year-old develop two alcoholic beverages based on his grandfather's secret recipes. His grandfather had owned a bar that was a

Chicago institution.

To do this, Dafoe first created the drinks using the original recipes and then tried to duplicate them using a variety of chemicals.

"Once you know the chemistry, it's all art," he said.

After sending numerous samples to the young entrepreneur, they agreed on a formulation that matched the original drink. Pro-Liquitech then manufactured the flavor concentrate and found a plant that could produce and bottle the drinks. Dafoe visited the plant to make sure the drinks were mixed and bottled properly. So far, the drinks have proven to be very successful in Chicago.

Joe Heron, an entrepreneur in Minneapolis, said he chose to work with Pro-Liquitech because Dafoe likes to work with small entrepreneurial companies.

"Pro-Liquitech helped me intellectually, emotionally and operationally," said Heron, whose new company, Ardea Beverage Co., will launch a line of nutrient-enhanced sodas this month. "They're probably the best company I've ever worked with."

Heron added that nutrient drinks sometimes have a bad taste, but Pro-Liquitech came up with creative ways to make his drinks taste good.

Pro-Liquitech doesn't manufacture drinks in-house. They send flavor concentrate in 5-gal-



by contributing photographer JACOB GLASSNER

David Dafoe, owner of Pro-Liquitech International, posed with some of the products that his Jeffersontown company has developed and produced. His extraordinary senses of taste and smell brought him to Louisville with the Brown-Forman Beverage Co., where he created Jack Daniel's Lynchburg Lemonade, but he formed his own company, which makes flavor concentrates for beverages for clients around the world, in 1992.

lon buckets to factories all over the country and throughout the world. If a drink proves to be suc-

cessful, the continued sales of flavor concentrate pay like an annuity.

About 50 percent of Dafoe's clients are international. He has had clients from China, Japan,

France, Australia, Iceland and Brazil.

Currently, he is working with a South African company on a drink called Meccan Cola. The cinnamon-flavored drink is designed to appeal to the country's large Muslim population.

Pro-Liquitech recently ended a five-year agreement with Jones Soda that included creating unique drinks like baked ham soda and a taco flavored soda, but Dafoe said the company's biggest success has been its work with Sunsweet, which included the creation of an alternative to prune juice called PlumSmart.

What makes these accomplishments even more intriguing is the fact that Dafoe's degree from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, is in zoology. After graduation, he found a job with a flavor company, and there he discovered his unique talent.

Several years later, he moved to Louisville to work for Brown-Forman Beverage Co. where he created Jack Daniel's Lynchburg Lemonade, but he soon decided he wanted to work with all types of beverages, and that's how Pro-Liquitech came into being.

"Most of my friends and people I went to college with, hate their jobs. ... I really enjoy my job," said Dafoe.

Pro-Liquitech's Web site is flavorman.com. Its phone number is 266-7377.