

SIPA HELPS NONGFU SPRING TURN A FRESH IDEA FOR BOTTLED TEA INTO REALITY



One of China's largest beverage companies has turned to SIPA to help it bring a new concept to life. Nongfu Spring is a major supplier of mineral water, tapping into no fewer than eight sources across the country, with its filling operations all located close by. It also produces various fruit and vegetable juices, health drinks, and teas. The company is headquartered in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang Province. Last year, SIPA collaborated with Nongfu Spring on the development of a novel bottle for two new products – a matcha milk tea and black tea latte. Unlike many other teas on the market, these Nongfu Spring teas contain milk, which is one reason why the bottles have shrink labels covering their entire visible surfaces. This prolongs shelf life, and also makes the bottles particu-

larly attractive.

Cheng Feng, senior packaging specialist at SIPA, says the development of the bottle was quite challenging. Original concepts were developed by Mousegraphics, a leading packaging design studio located in Athens. Mousegraphics came up with a highly innovative design, a circular bottle with a straight taper all the way to the top – echoing the shape of a bamboo whisk that is used when these drinks are prepared traditionally. This presented challenges in obtaining good material distribution, especially around the neck area, says Cheng Feng. "This is not a normal bottle, it's special," he says. "Our engineering also had to think of ways to get the center of gravity in the right place, to make the bottle stable. But SIPA has been solving industrial design



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problems for a long time, and we have a knowledge base that goes back more than 25 years, so of course in the end the problem was solved.” Indeed, when the new teas were launched on the market, they drew lavish praise from consumers.

SIPA’s product development input for the new tea bottle was complemented with new tools. The company built supplied Nongfu Spring with molds for the preforms as well as for the finished bottles. The molds run on machines from diverse suppliers. Nongfu already had good experience with SIPA molds. It began using cold halves from the company for preforms for 1.5-L mineral water bottles in mid-2012, and now has three sets. Last year, it took delivery in July of two complete sets (29 cavities) of blow molds for 320ml bottles; then in November SIPA supplied a cold half for the production of preforms for 4-L water bottles.

Nongfu is satisfied with SIPA that we succeeded in taking the original design for these bottles and turning it into an industrial product. Nongfu is also very happy that the SIPA molds match their existing injection and stretch-blow moulding machines very well. SIPA is helping Nongfu Spring keep its leading position in the market here in China.