

ICLA



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Montana State University launches Gold Rush Huckleberry Lemonade

How do you transform a game day tradition and into a new retail product? At Montana State University (MSU), we leveraged the excitement of the Gold Rush game – our first home football game of the season and one of the most beloved athletics traditions of the year – by launching a Montana-made product bearing the same name, Gold Rush Huckleberry Lemonade.

Relationships Matter

Local licensee Harrington Bottling Company is also our campus pouring rights holder. We had a strong relationship with them as their beverages are highly visible in the campus dining halls, food service areas and sports facilities, and they had previously launched a successful MSU Bobcats-branded bottled water. They proposed leveraging the Gold

Rush brand name and building on the game's popularity by creating a new unique beverage. Our team met to define the key criteria for the project:

- Incorporate student preferences into the product
- Showcase a strong connection to Montana products
- Generate excitement and appeal to a broad audience

Students Selected the Flavor

Using consumer research and data from the campus fountains, we knew students preferred certain flavor profiles. We also knew they were seeking a zero- or low-sugar product; two of the top choices in the campus fountains were sparkling waters and lemonade.

The team narrowed down the initial eight flavor profiles to four flavors that our students could taste test using sparkling water and lemonade paired with local flavors such as Flathead cherries and Montana huckleberries. During lunch time in the dining halls, our team encouraged students to sample each flavor and let their voices be heard by voting for their favorite.

We then started the campaign to "Take the Gold Rush Challenge" using T-shirts, social media, banners and table tents to market. Students were able to select one of the two finalist flavors on the fountain or place their vote via text. The Huckleberry Lemonade was the clear winner and went into production for release in the fall semester.

Product Launch

In advance of the Gold Rush game, we premiered the new beverage to students and campus members. The vendor delivered palettes on ice and our team handed out 1,500 bottles in just two hours. The Gold Rush Huckleberry Lemonade was noted as the featured concession item at the Gold Rush football game and a live read welcomed the newest member of the Bobcat family.

The Gold Rush Huckleberry Lemonade is now available in local gas stations, convenience, and grocery stores as well as on campus. It's being distributed across Southwest Montana, including West Yellowstone, one of the gateways to Yellowstone National Park. The label highlights Montana State University's spirit and notes that the lemonade "features refreshing lemonade and Montana's native huckleberry. With every sip you'll taste MSU's signature sunlight gold and ether blue."

The program was a success due to the partner relationship that had been developed, the engagement of the students and the product's quality.



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