



Press Release

combifitPremium makes its debut in North America

Rich variety of the finest quality:

Stirrings launches Bar & Cocktail Mixes in carton packs

March 2009. Stirrings, the leading innovative cocktail brand, has once again revolutionized the cocktail ingredient landscape with the introduction of its new Bar Solutions line in *combifitPremium* 1,000 ml from SIG Combibloc. Launching in April 2009, Stirrings will be the first to introduce this carton pack with screw cap combiSwift in North America. The Bar Solutions line is available in six varieties: Bloody Mary, Mojito, Margarita, Cosmopolitan, Pomegranate and Wild Blueberry. Packaged in convenient re-closable aseptic carton packs, the products will be targeted to food-service providers in the hotel, restaurant and bar segments.

Stirrings' Bar Solution line is priced in the line with the on-premise mixer category average. Each of the six variants is made of all-natural ingredients like real juice and cane sugar and is packed at the peak of freshness to provide a consistent and convenient solution behind the bar.

Almost nine years ago, friends Gil MacLean and Bill Creelman founded Stirrings in Nantucket, Massachusetts. From their fond memory of their childhood they had spent together and to mark their shared passion for good food prepared from fresh, sun-ripened products, they came up with the key philosophy for their professional future: 'Better ingredients lead to better taste and better times'.

Stirrings is the world leader in premium all-natural Cocktail Mixers and an innovative company redefining the way people enjoy cocktails in all occasions, by its simplicity and its superior ingredients. They set out to give the market only the finest real fruit juice, triple-filtered water and cane sugar to create natural, premium quality products.

Today, slightly modified from their original vision, the credo 'Better ingredients – simply better cocktails' is now the company's guiding ethos. Stirrings entire product range is based on natural, organic ingredients and contains absolutely no preservatives, colourings or other artificial additives.

combifit*Premium* meets all demands

Stirrings' high quality standards extend to its use of processing technology that is particularly gentle on the products, by selecting packaging solutions that offer the best in product protection. "Premium products deserve premium packaging", says Kristine Ford, Marketing Director of Stirrings, referring to the performance of the packaging in terms of product quality and with respect to the convenience aspects and the possibilities for product differentiation. The aseptic carton pack from SIG Combibloc was also chosen for its modern design and practicality – perfectly shaped with a convenient spout solution, combined with a long shelf life and eco-friendly position. The production of carton packs conserves natural resources. About 75 percent of a carton pack consists of fibre pulp obtained from wood, a renewable resource. Thus carton packaging leaves only a small carbon footprint - with obvious benefits for climate protection.

"It is a suitable and eco-friendly carton pack that helps drive cost down and makes it possible for bartenders to have it all: quality, price and convenience", continues Kristine Ford.

With the launch of the Bar Solutions line from Stirrings, the stable, slender packaging solution combifit*Premium* with screw cap combiSwift is making its first appearance on the North American market. According to consumer research, with its unique shape combifit*Premium* is visually perceived at first glance as a special, premium packaging. combifit*Premium* is curved outward at the front and inward at the back and has a slanted top with a recloseable screw cap. Its ergonomic design makes combifit*Premium* very comfortable to grip and easy to use. Drinks can be poured and measured out with the utmost accuracy and the carton pack can be safely reclosed after initial opening.

High level of product protection for finest quality

Packaged in an aseptic carton pack, the products are protected from light and oxygen permeation. The natural flavours, colours, nutrients and the vitamins in the product are also retained. This was a key factor in Stirrings' decision to expand its product range with premium cocktail mixes in combifit*Premium* from SIG Combibloc.

The aseptic process is a key feature of the filling technology. In this process, the juices are heated over a very short period to about 90 °C and then rapidly cooled back to room temperature. Inside the SIG Combibloc filling machines, the carton sleeves are shaped and the bases are sealed. Then the interior of the package is sterilised. Next, the products are filled into the carton packs in the sterile aseptic zone of the filling machine. Finally, the top seam of the carton pack is ultrasonically sealed above the product filling level. The aseptically packaged products are shelf stable and can be kept for long periods of time without refrigeration or preservatives.

Co-Packer: Island Oasis

To fill the products, Stirrings works with US co-packer Island Oasis through its Island Aseptics division; this company offers its customers a variety of different packaging solutions for filling foods into aseptic carton packs. The Island Aseptics division and its customers benefit from the flexibility of the SIG Combibloc filling system: with identical base area, the classic *combibloc* format and the premium *combifit* format can be filled on the same machine, in a range of different volumes. Inside the filling machine, the aseptic filling process is the same for both format series. The only difference is the carton sleeves which have very specific creasing patterns that determine the final shape of each carton format. It takes only minutes to change the format or the volume in the filling machine and there is no need to re-sterilise the machine or change machine parts during this quick change process. This flexibility contributes significantly to the optimal use of machine capacity and delivers a highly efficient production process.

With filling machines from SIG Combibloc, the carton design can be changed with no interruption to the production process and with minimal wastage. This design flexibility offers the simplest and quickest way to fill a product in a variety of carton designs. It makes it possible to fill products in the appropriate visual design for multiple targeted markets and distribution channels, accommodating a broad range of product brand positioning from the same filling line.

Captions:

Stirrings, the leading innovative cocktail brand, has once again revolutionized the cocktail ingredient landscape with the introduction of its new Bar Solutions line in combiFit Premium 1,000 ml from SIG Combibloc. Launching in April 2009, Stirrings will be the first to introduce this carton pack with screw cap combiSwift in North America. The Bar Solutions line is available in six varieties: Bloody Mary, Mojito, Margarita, Cosmopolitan, Pomegranate and Wild Blueberry.

Photo: SIG Combibloc

SIG Combibloc is one of the world's leading system suppliers of carton packaging and filling machines for beverages and food. In 2008 the company achieved a turnover of 1,249 million Euro with around 4,100 employees in 40 countries. SIG Combibloc belongs to SIG Holding in Switzerland, which is part of the New Zealand based Rank Group.

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