

Forward Thinking: Aloe and Agave Redefined

From tissues to detergents to cocktails and beyond, new applications breed new sensory experiences with healthy positioning

Aloe vera and *Agave americana* are both perennial, succulent plants that at first glance look alike. *Aloe vera* is native to Africa, and is now grown in South Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The gel from the pulp of aloe leaves has been used for centuries to treat burns, wounds and skin conditions, and as a laxative. In its unprocessed form, it is most commonly used to treat sunburn. Today, aloe is a ubiquitous ingredient used in skincare and personal care products.

Agave americana, also known as the century plant and maguey in Mexico, is often mistaken for aloe. It is of Mexican origin and frequently associated with the production of tequila. However, just as champagne can only come from the Champagne region of France, tequila can only be made from blue agave (*Agave tequilana*) from Jalisco, Mexico. In addition to tequila, blue agave produces agave nectar, also known as agave syrup. For centuries in Mexico, this sap has been used to create honey water. When fermented, it is used to make *pulque*, an alcoholic beverage. Recently, agave nectar has been commercialized and touted as a “raw” and “natural” sweetener alternative to sugar, artificial sweeteners, honey and, most notably, high fructose corn syrup. This positioning is highly controversial. The manufacturing process and resulting fructose content of agave nectar is the underlying issue, which leads some to question whether it is indeed truly “natural” and “healthful.” In an October 2009 article by Laura Johannes in the *Wall Street Journal*, Sabra Van Dolsen, president of Colibree Co. claims that “agave is 1.4 to 1.6 times as sweet as sugar.”

Controversies aside, aloe and agave are impacting the fragrance and flavor industry, crossing categories and turning up in many new product launches.

Resurgent Aloe

Aloe is having a renaissance in nearly every category. It continues to appear in skin care and has crossed all beauty categories, including bath and body care, hair care, and antiperspirant/deodorant. It has also migrated into paper products, laundry, and air care.

To promote Unilever's *Vaseline Aloe Fresh* brand, the company launched high-profile multiplatform advertising campaigns on television and online. *Vaseline Aloe Fresh* is available in *Moisturizing Body Gel*, *Hydrating Body Lotion* and *Protecting Body Lotion with SPF 15*.



For those who prefer to do-it-yourself (DIY), Dunecraft offers the *Indispensible Aloe* plant and planter that enables consumers to “grow [their] own skin soother and air cleaner.”

Aloe has trickled down into hair care and antiperspirant/deodorant brands such as *TRESemme Naturals Nourishing Moisture Shampoo and Conditioner Aloe Vera and Avocado* and *Secret Fresh Effects Cucumber Aloe Anti-Perspirant Deodorant*. It has even made its way into paper products like *Kleenex*

Lotion Facial Tissue with Aloe & E and *Cottonelle Aloe & E* toilet paper. In addition, aloe has been featured in laundry care applications such as *Ultra Purex Natural Elements Citrus & Aloe* and *Bounce Pure Essentials Fabric Sheets Aloe & White Lilac*. Woodwick Nature's *Retreat Trilogy Jar Candle* features *Meadow Walk*, *Soothing Aloe* and *Agave Nectar* fragrances.

In fact, aloe is now so ubiquitous that it appears in unexpected categories such as *CoverGirl Emery Boards with Aloe* and *Earth Therapeutics Aloe Socks*, which are infused with *Aloe vera* and are available in a variety of styles. This year's notable aloe introduction is *Vet's + Best Sun Relief Spray Sunscreen for Dogs Aloe & Willowherb*. Aloe will remain in vogue and continue to materialize in all beauty care categories. However, the most exciting aloe activity is in the food and beverage industry.

Aloe in Food and Beverage Categories

The green movement has influenced consumers to seek healthy foods and beverages. Aloe, long recognized for its topical health properties, has now moved into beverages.



Aloe

There has been a surge of activity in the ready to drink (RTD) marketplace with brands such as ALOdrink, Ace Farm and El Sol/It's the Sun. ALOdrink offers seven flavors: *Allure*—Aloe + Mangosteen + Mango; *Appeal*—Aloe + Pomelo + Grapefruit + Lemon; *Awaken*—Aloe + Wheat Grass; *Exposed*—Aloe; *Elated*—Aloe + Olive Leaf; *Enlighten*—Aloe + 12 Fruits & Vegetables; and *Enrich*—Aloe + Pomegranate + Cranberry. Ace Farm Aloe features 10 variants, all based on fruit flavors, including common fruits such as strawberry, grape and peach, and tropical fruits such as guava, lychee, mango and pineapple. El Sol/It's the Sun Aloe vera juices come in five flavors, including the original aloe with pulp and a sugar-free version. In addition to RTD beverages, Aloe vera is appearing as a key ingredient on juice bar menus. The Elixir Bar in ABC Kitchen with Jean-Georges in New York features the 24 Karat juice with carrot, apple, beet, aloe, ginger and blue-green algae, while Liquiteria in New York offers the Skin Trip, made with carrot, spinach, cucumber, parsley, Aloe vera and a “liver kidney lymph detox.”

Aloe also is emerging as an ingredient in cocktail culture. Bacardi recently introduced *Torched Cherry Rum*, which “combines the rich, bold taste of Barbados cherries with the light, smooth infusion of Torch Plant aloe.” The Apotheke bar in New York divides its cocktails into “sections of apothecary” such as health and beauty, stress relievers, pain killers, and pharmaceuticals. The *Sparkling Star* cocktail, under the health and beauty section, is made with muddled star fruit, fresh Aloe vera, vodka and champagne. Mixologist Miguel Aranda of Yerba Buena Perry in New York offers the *Royal* cocktail crafted from Royal Combier, Aloe vera, strawberry puree and sparkling wine. Mixologist Erik Holzherr of Wisdom in Washington, DC, is known for his *Rain* martini created with Plymouth gin, Senior Curaçao of Curaçao, agave nectar, Aloe vera juice and white grape juice.

The succulent plant also has migrated to ice cream. La Mexicana Market in Kalamazoo, Michigan, offers a variety of homemade Mexican-flavored ice creams including Aloe vera, avocado, cactus, tamarind and horchata. DIY aloe ice cream recipes can be found at websites such as: www.ehow.com/how_5524886_make-aloe-ice-cream.html.

Agave Goes Mainstream

Agave nectar, once only found at local health food stores, is going mainstream. In the 1990s agave nectar was first commercially manufactured as a sweetener. *Madhava Agave Nectar*, launched in 2002, and *Wholesome Sweeteners' Organic Blue Agave*, launched in 2006, pioneered the commercialization of agave sweeteners in the United States. The agave craze has since spread; major natural grocery chains such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe's offer their signature brands, while smaller, new players have emerged, including *Ohgave! Premium Amber Blue Agave* and *Nature's Agave Premium Blue Agave*. The natural-claiming sweeteners are marketed to individuals pursuing raw, vegan, kosher or diabetic-friendly diets. There are

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a number of agave recipe websites such as www.madhasagave.com/UsingAgave.aspx and <http://rawepicurean.net/agave-nectar-recipes> that cater to this audience.


Agave is now shifting to beverages and ice cream. *Oogavé Sodas*, based in Denver, Colorado, creates six flavored sodas using agave nectar: *Cola*, *Ginger Ale*, *Grapefruit*, *Mandarin Key Lime*, *Root Beer* and *Watermelon Cream*. In Germany, *Organimals* organic soft drinks claim to use 100% organic ingredients and are sweetened with organic agave syrup. They are available in four flavors: *Berry Bear*, *Koala Cola*, *Lemon Lion* and *Orange-Utan*. Meanwhile, *Organic Nectars Non-Dairy Raw Organic Vegan Gelato* was the winner of the 2009 Gold Fancy Food Show for Outstanding Organic Product. The product

is made from organic, raw frozen cashew cream and sweetened with in-house organic nectars and raw, organic agave syrup. The product is offered in six flavors: *Cherry Chocolate*, *Chocolate*, *Chocolate Hazelnut*, *Mint Chocolate*, *Pistachio* and *Vanilla*. Agave Dream features ice cream made with no-hormone-added milk and agave nectar with flavors such as *Cinnamon*, *Cappuccino* and *Lavender*. A percentage of Agave Dream's proceeds are donated to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Agave Crosses Categories

In contrast to aloe, agave is moving from flavors to fragrances, inspiring new personal care and home fragrance launches. *Sumboddy Agave Nectar Face Wash* features agave nectar as a key ingredient that is "antibacterial and enriched with skin-soothing and healing vitamins." Under the *Cactus Toning* treatment line, Farmhouse Fresh introduced the *Soothing Agave Nectar* oil. The product is an "antiaging massage oil that can be used on the face and body, including the scalp." *Agave Nectar* is Thymes' newest bath and body collection, featuring 11 stock-keeping units (SKUs), including cologne, washes, lotions and home fragrance. *Voluspa Tuberosa Agave* is available in roll-on perfume, body lotion, and a candle. It highlights "Mexican tuberose, blue orris, coconut milk, musk and vetiver." In home fragrance, Archipelago offers two agave candle variants, *Agave* and *Agave Sage*, while *Aquiessé's* candle line includes the *Blue Agave* candle, which features "crisp citrus, melon, green aloe, fruity floral [notes], agave nectar and vanilla."

Aloe and agave will continue to impact the fragrance and flavor industry as both ingredients are explored for their topical and ingestible health benefits. Expect to see more activity in consumer packaged goods as aloe and agave cross categories and appear in new applications and product launches.

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