

BEVERAGE BUSINESS INSIGHTS

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PROFILE: NA Beer Pioneer Bravus Branches Out into Energy Teas, Sparkling Wines; Now in 22 States Bravus Brewing can't claim to be the first NA beer. It was preceded by decades by mediocre mass entrants that left stigma on category that its founder Philip Brandes still feels as a headwind in winning over skeptical consumers. So Bravus, which launched in 2015, aims to position itself as the first good-tasting NA, at least among domestic entrants. Tho it's been leapfrogged in sales by later entrants, most notably that juggernaut Athletic, co continues to ply its trade out of its Anaheim, Calif, base via unusual strategy that has it teaming on taproom with its former contract brewer, which it bought out, and extending far beyond NA beer into sparkling wine, hopped teas and CBD bevs to capture younger consumers whose interests on alc side may have strayed beyond beer to items like White Claw and cocktail RTDs.

By now brand is in 22 states, adding one or two every month or so, building out DSD network that still counts Pac NW and Florida as key voids. It's cracked Total Wine and Target chains and will add Walmart in spring. One key priority in 2024 will be to build out on-premise presence, for brand whose process lends itself well to draft offerings.

The focus is a broad range of beer styles, including West Coast IPA, Blood Orange IPA, Golden Light, Peanut Butter Dark, Oatmeal Dark and Raspberry Gose, but it's also got unusually diverse array of flanker entries, some of them still testing as DTC and taproom items until concept is proven out. Those include Focus Hop Water, made with 100% organic ingredient bill including Amarillo and Citra hops, ginger, Siberian ginseng, green tea and L-theanine, with hint of lemon too and just 5 calories per 12-oz can. The cleverly named Wine0 non-alc sparkling rosé even drew admiring online review from former (and now dry) Astor Wine & Spirits exec Howard Lieberman, who declared himself "blown away – no more scoffing" at NA wine category. And with energy category well served with conventional entries, Bravus is trying to get a foot in door with Hopped Up Fizzy Energy Tea with black tea base, 120 mg of caffeine and functionals like Siberian ginseng and L-theanine. It also dabbles in cannabevs under separate Whirl moniker with CBD Lemon + Ginger and Delta-8 Lemon + Ginger entries. All are made in-house in Anaheim.