



Ken Hoffman

Aug. 8, 2007, 4:58PM

Diet drink mix is, um, *muy bueno*

By KEN HOFFMAN
Copyright 2007 Houston Chronicle

When Marcy Johnson read about our friend Yonny Demeris trying to lose weight — and still tipple his favorite Crown Royal and water — she had something to help Yonny.

She had Zilch.

And if you're trying to lose weight and still catch a buzz, Zilch adds up.

"When I turned 50, I knew I had to do something. I'm a Texan, and I love my Mexican food and margaritas. But I saw where the typical margarita has 580 calories and 50 carbs. Whoa! I decided to create a diet margarita," Johnson said.

She cleared the kitchen table in her home in The Woodlands and went to work like a mad scientist. Two weeks later, she had Zilch.

Now you can drink up and slim down.

"It's a powdered concoction that we put in little packets about the size of a sugar packet. You go into a bar or restaurant or a party and order a tequila on the rocks. Just take a packet of Zilch from your purse or pocket and sprinkle it into the tequila on the rocks. Now you've got an authentic-tasting margarita with zero carbs and zero sugar. Zilch itself has no calories, so the whole drink will have only 70 or 80 calories from the tequila, and still no carbs. It's a good deal for people who want to enjoy a margarita and stick to their low-carb diet. Here's a margarita that's only two points on the Weight Watchers plan," Johnson said.

Zilch uses aspartame as a sweetener.

"I originally invented Zilch just for myself. But all my friends said I should market it. My son and I made a deal. He would do all the work, and we'd go halvesies on the deal. Now we're in 63 stores in Houston, including most of the big liquor stores like Spec's."

She said coming up with the name for her product was the hardest part. Before settling on Zilch, they considered Rip and Roar, Open and Stir, Island Spirit, Twist and Shout, and a dozen more.

Zilch says the most.

A box of Zilch goes for \$4.99 and contains 10 packets. For a list of stores that sell Zilch, click on www.zilchmixers.com.

• **Today's trivia** (courtesy of the *The Book of General Ignorance* by John Lloyd and John Mitchinson): Sticking with things of an alcohol nature, what is James Bond's favorite adult beverage — the drink he drinks the most in the Bond novels?

Clue: It is not a vodka martini.

• Oops, Richard Lewis has scratched his Sept. 20-23 series of shows at the Improv comedy club on Interstate 10. That's Yom Kippur weekend.

Lewis already has enough to ask forgiveness for without working on the Jewish Day of Atonement.

He's rescheduling.

Lewis is currently on tour with fellow *Curb Your Enthusiasm* stand-ups Susie Essman and Jeff Garland.

• Got a note from my Dallas food spy Maria Muñoz-Blanco, who's also the director of cultural affairs for Big D.

She's stumbled onto something at Dean Fearing's new restaurant in the Ritz-Carlton up there that will make your head fall off.

Chicken-fried Maine lobster!

Nobody will ever top that. Good night, everybody, drive home safely.

• **Trivia answer:** James Bond averages one drink every seven pages in the Bond series by Ian Fleming. That's 317 drinks.

His favorite libation is whiskey (101 of them), followed by bourbon (58) and scotch (38).

The book *You Only Live Twice* is set mostly in Japan. Agent 007 drinks 35 sakes in that one.