



July 2015

## Tapping New Markets: With DRINKmaple, Kate Weiler '04 makes sap the latest health drink

Elaine K. Howley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine>



Part of the [Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Howley, Elaine K. (2015) "Tapping New Markets: With DRINKmaple, Kate Weiler '04 makes sap the latest health drink," *Colby Magazine*: Vol. 104 : Iss. 1 , Article 31.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine/vol104/iss1/31>

This Exclusively Online is brought to you for free and open access by the Colby College Archives at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colby Magazine by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Colby.

## Tapping New Markets

With DRINKmaple, Kate Weiler '04 makes sap the latest health drink

By Elaine K. Howley

Every spring a bit of natural magic takes place in millions of maple trees across the northeastern U.S. and eastern Canada. Days thaw, sap begins to run, and enterprising farmers collect and boil the watery liquid down into viscous, delicious syrup.

Or not.

Maple sap, it turns out, is a nutritious, tasty, and hydrating drink that's gaining a foothold in the beverage industry thanks, in part, to Kate Weiler '04. Weiler tapped into this new market with her company, DRINKmaple, launched in January 2014.

Based in Concord, Mass., DRINKmaple is off to a gushing start. To meet growing demand the company increased production 40-fold from 2014 to 2015, and it recently closed a round of investment searching that netted roughly \$1.5 million to fund future growth.



Not bad for entrepreneurs who had to learn the beverage industry from scratch.

It all began at IRONMAN Mont-Tremblant in Quebec, where Weiler and DRINKmaple cofounder Jeff Rose were competing. A nutritionist in private practice at the time, Weiler was a devotee of coconut water, but her favorite brand was sold out. In a coffee shop

before race registration, Weiler discovered maple water, a local product. “I was instantly hooked,” she said.

Back home in Boston, where Weiler couldn’t find maple water anywhere, she saw an untapped opportunity. “We’re shipping coconuts from across the world for natural hydration when we have a resource right here in our backyard that we’re only utilizing to make maple syrup,” she said.

Weiler and Rose decided to make the big leap.

Thus ensued a self-assigned crash course in maple sap, production, distribution—and in the whole array of skills needed for successful entrepreneurship.

“We called some maple farmers and learned it’s a lot harder than it seems like it should be,” Weiler said, referring to the logistics involved in transporting sap to a bottling facility before it spoils, which can happen quickly. “It was really discouraging having multiple bottlers saying it couldn’t be done.”

But the pair persevered and started working with Steuben Foods in Elma, N.Y. “I’ve got to give the credit to Jeff for how well he’s figured out the maple world,” Weiler said. “I’ve learned a lot about the industry, but he’s been able to form very strong relationships with the people running these maple operations and connect with the right people, who’ve been so helpful in building out the supply chain. We’ve found just amazing people in that industry.”

For their part, producers seem happy about the arrival of maple water. As producers embrace the new way to diversify their businesses, Weiler said, DRINKmaple fields requests all the time from sugar makers interested in selling sap. “It’s less energy and fuel for them to sell us sap, and it offers them another avenue for revenue rather than syrup.”

DRINKmaple products are currently distributed through Whole Foods Market across New England and through health food stores, co-ops, yoga studios, juice bars, gyms, and spin studios in the region. It’s available in some 200 locations in New York City, and Whole Foods will soon launch it in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

A lacrosse player at Colby, Weiler credits athletics for teaching her to be dedicated to pursuing her goals and psychology for preparing her for the challenges of sales and marketing. “Being a psychology major, that plays into everything,” she said.

Colby also provided her with a close-knit community. “Other alumni have been very supportive of the venture,” Weiler said. “The emotional connection really is what makes that school so special.”

Colby connections include Derek Taff ’04, a Boston-based investor and friend from high school and college. Taff said he was impressed with the strong work ethic and remarkable focus Weiler brings to everything she pursues—so much so that he’s become a

DRINKmaple investor. “Even though I’m an investor professionally, this is very different from what I would do normally,” he said. “This is very much an investment in Kate. ... When she sinks her teeth into something, she’s bound to be successful with it.”

Weiler, meanwhile, is all in. “I’m intrigued and passionate and want to learn everything about it.”

 [Share](#)  [Like](#)  1

0 Comments

Sort by [Top](#) ▼



Add a comment...

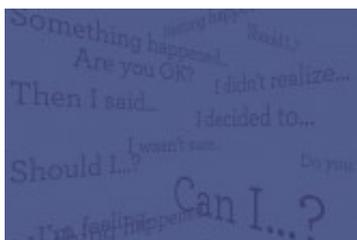
 Facebook Comments Plugin

## Most Shared



### **Tapping New Markets**

With DRINKmaple, Kate Weiler '04 makes sap the latest health...



### **Confronting Sexual Conduct**

Student-led Colby program demands honesty and accountability



### **Brian MacQuarrie**

Boston Globe reporter Brian MacQuarrie '74 on assignment covering the...

