

“My Journey with the Miracle Tree”

Interview with Russell Bianchi, Top Food Scientist and Formulator of the Zija™ Moringa oleifera Beverages

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2009 • ORLANDO, FLORIDA

I run a company in Monterey, California, that does three things. We either create products from scratch, or we convert existing brands, or we stabilize and extend shelf life. I've been doing this now for going-on three decades, with the last ten years trying to do it all naturally. I work in five areas of law: pharmaceutical and drug development, nutraceutical or dietary nutritional supplementation, food and beverage, flavor chemistry, and cosmetics.

When Ken [Brailsford, founder of Zija International™, Nature's Sunshine™, and Enrich™, industry icon] and his team approached me on this, I was extremely reticent—and not so much because of their opening line, “We have this tree and we want to put it into a bottle.” (I don't know how your mind works, but that sounded provocative to me and I thought to myself, looking out the window at the gardener in our industrial park where our labs are, “Do I need to go out and get the tree shredder and put some sawdust into a bottle?”) It was at about their fourth line, when they said they were from multi-level marketing, that I hung up the phone!

They called back and said, “Oh, we got disconnected.” And I said, “Well, I don't know who you are, or how you got my phone number, but I just don't work in that area.” They said, “Well, why not?” And I said, “Because it always seems to be a fruit, a berry, a leaf, a bush—a burning bush for all I know—and it never seems to have any efficacious amounts of those raw materials in the finished product. So, thank you very much, but I'm not interested.” And they said, “No, no, no! Please, investigate what we're talking about here, and get back to us.” This conversation went back and forth for quite some time.

What really caught my eye, after investigating *Moringa oleifera* for myself in the medical, pharmacological and botanical literature, was that I came across an abstract from the World Health Organization in Rome, where very tiny amounts, 400 mg, which would be just under 1/50th of an ounce, in water, just from the leaf of *Moringa oleifera* was, not arresting, but reversing inflammation in toddlers. It was regenerating renal [kidney] failure, with macular [eye] rejuvenation, and a number of aspects that I found astonishing. As an empiricist, my immediate question was, “If this plant truly does what this says it does, why in the world is no one using it?”

We have a postulate in science called “Occum's Razor” that invariably the simplest answer tends to be the correct one. So I called up a number of my “pharma” friends and asked, “Hey, have you ever heard of the Moringa?” “Oh yeah, we know all about it. We've tried to sequence it, we tried to patent it as a drug—it doesn't work!” “Why doesn't it work?” “Well, when we synthesize it to patent it, we lose all the amino-acid sequencings.”

That sounded reasonable to me, so then I said OK to Ken and his team and I said, “I'll take a look at it but I'm not promising you I'll do anything with it.” They sent me some samples and then I knew exactly why no one was using it. Because it had to be orally ingested in a raw or natural form, and the product violated the first of my five rules of formulating—it tasted horrible! I mean, it was one of the toughest, most bad tasting and smelling things I had ever come across in my entire career!

And there are five rules in my business. If you're going to ingest something, it has to taste good, or it has to taste great. I don't care if it slices bread, costs nothing, and cures cancer! If it doesn't taste good, folks aren't going to take it a second time. Secondly, it has to meet an economic model that makes sense for the distribution it's in. So if it costs a million dollars a unit, then gee, other than William Buffet and Bill Gates, I don't think many people are going to buy it! Thirdly, it has to be mass-producible on a replicable basis on existing plant equipment. You can't reinvent the wheel to make something. Fourthly, it has to be regulatory-compliant, meaning it has to comply within the area of law it's under. And fifthly, if it's providing functionality, or making functional or structured claims, it must absolutely do what it says, at efficacious dosage levels. Which brings us back to, "How in the world do you get there with something that tastes so bad?"

And the truth of the matter is that it became Edisonian in approach—99% perspiration, 1% inspiration. I got into this specifically for the reason that I realized the nutrient values currently in our food-and-beverage chain have been horrifically "dumbed down." In the mid 1960s, with the average Western or modern diet, we consumed about 1500 calories a day. It was from the four basic food groups that were relatively unprocessed.

And few people were getting nutrient-deplete-triggered dispositions, like insulin resistance, or diabetes, or cardiovascular issues, or nutrient-deplete-triggered forms of cancer and, most recently, obesity that we all see here in the United States. And I said, "Think of the epidemiological or actuarial opportunity here. I can vicariously practice medicine by delivering an honest plant to the marketplace."

And you have to understand that in drug development, 82% or more, depending on the category, of all drugs come originally from plants. And then they're sequenced into a molecule that is patented to protect it in the marketplace for a period of time. So I said, "If I can get this into something that is efficacious, that meets my five requirements, think of the opportunity to improve folks' lives!"

Because today, the average American consumes over 3200 calories per day, but they are receiving 75% less in nutrient value than they did in the mid '60s, with 1500 calories a day. To paraphrase a political bumper-sticker slogan from a while ago, "It's the food chain, stupid!" Today, we are over-consuming, yet we're still highly undernourished. It's not a mystery in the pandemic of obesity in America today, as to why 34.8% of the US population is medically diagnosed as morbidly obese, and another 32% are diagnosed as obese. More than two-thirds of America today is fat!

The issue becomes one of, "Why?" Well, when you don't have nutrients in your food and beverages, you don't trigger leptin, which triggers satiation subliminally in your body, and you keep consuming more and more. And that more and more not utilized for energy or blood glucose is stored as body fat.

On top of that, something bad happened. There was a train wreck in terms of economic motive in the early '70s. We had very high-priced sweeteners in America, specifically cane and beet sugar, that were subsidized under the Federal Farm Bill and other subsidies. The cost of that raw material was about five times that outside the United States. It was easier to get illicit, powdered drugs in from South America than it was to get sugar in from the Caribbean!

So, what did we have lots of in America? We had very inexpensive corn that we fed mostly to cattle. We converted that starch from the cornfield into a sweetener that was named "fructose" but was not fruit sugar. No one consumed that product in 1970. Today, the average American is consuming almost 100 pounds a year per person!

And the reason for it is that, after air, water and salt, the next least costly bulking ingredient to put into food-and-beverage ingestibles is high-fructose corn syrup. Now, why is that bad? Fructose doesn't raise blood sugar nor crash it down. You would think, on the face of it, that would be great for a diabetic. In point of fact, it's a disaster—a giant train wreck in slow motion. We knew back then that it's not converted into blood glucose or energy, because it's converted to body fat, adipose tissue, or it jacks up the triglycerides in your bloodstream. The number-one reason for cardiovascular issues and obesity in America today is high-fructose corn syrup!

So if you're consuming sodas or ice cream, or hard candies, or if you're consuming prepared foods found in the center aisles of your supermarket, and if you're consuming junk food or fast food, in fact, you are consuming inordinate levels of a harmful ingredient. High-fructose corn syrup didn't even receive from the federal government (the FDA) a generally recognized safe status until about 26 years after it was approved, and that was only through a political back-door, and lobbying by the corn lobby.

So, as the Asians say, "In every disaster, there is opportunity!" The opportunity here is with Zija's Smart Drink, Smart Mix and XM3, for you to provide yourself, your family, your friends, your colleagues, not only a high-potency supplement with the nutrition you're not receiving in your normal daily ingestion, but also creating a satiety or appetite-control effect that simply doesn't exist elsewhere.

There are lots of juices that exist in the marketplace. I've evaluated probably the top 19 or 20 beverage offerings in direct marketing. And the modus operandi remains the same. And this is why I didn't want to get involved even with Moringa unless it was going to be efficacious. They start with something that is honest in its nutrient value, but by the time it's de-ionized, stripped, cooked, pasteurized and concentrated into its final forms, you're buying a glorified fruit smoothie at a very expensive cost—sometimes claiming to be all-natural when they're not even that. They'll claim that ingredients are "all-natural" because there's no definitional standard for ingredients using the term natural.

That is fundamentally different than what we did here. I failed 143 times over an eight-month period on delivering Zija to market. It was only on the 144th try that I succeeded. I had personally given up at 130 tries and was going to send Mr. Brailsford back his deposit, and say, "Great tree, Ken! It has all these wonderful things in it, but we're not going to get there."

But it was my wife who chided me into continuing with this, saying, "You broke your promise to this man, and you have to continue with this. You were the one boasting that you were going to vicariously practice medicine by changing this ingestible to deliver to people—you owe the world this." And so, it was my wife who humbled me to continue with it. But it was probably the most difficult, most complex beverage that I've ever been involved with.

Now, why is it different? Well, the 5.5-oz. can of Zija has over 30 grams [30,000 mg] of proprietary Moringa oleifera mix in it. So, we're delivering the value of over 92 assayable, naturally occurring nutrients, including 18 essential amino acids (your body only produces 12) that are sequenced correctly. You have antioxidants, anticarcinogens, the three Omega essential fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and anti-inflammatories—the list is long! And the efficaciousness of this is verified by a recent study done by the National Institutes of Health [NIH] on Moringa oleifera, that you can find online at www.drinklifein.com.

You should consider reading my colleague's book, *Miracle Tree*, by Dr. Monica Marcu. This is a woman who is the "Tiger Woods of Botanical Pharmacopoeia" in the world. She single-handedly built up the European Union Research Library from less than 5,000 plants to over a quarter of a million! Then, she did it again for Health Canada, and ended up at the NIH.

But before she retired to pursue her plant photography, she wrote one last book specifically on *Moringa oleifera*. And I didn't even know about it while I was formulating with it. And she maintains, as do I, and now the National Institutes of Health, as well as other third-party-verified, empirical organizations, that, in fact, *Moringa oleifera* is what the world truly needs to fix our "broken delivery system" of nutrient absorption, and potency in dosage of these nutrients for folks.

But keep in mind that a 5.5 oz. can of Zija is designed for an average 150-lb. person. And it's going to depend on a specific person, their predisposition, over a specific period of time and of dosages, in combination of other caloric intake and/or exercise regimen, to achieve the net result. It doesn't work the same on everyone. And anyone telling you that a fruit beverage, at one shot-glass a day—or a bottle's worth a day for that matter—is good for everyone, is not being honest with you.

We deal in real science here at Zija. These products are made to US Pharmacopoeia standards, sold under dietary supplement law, and delivered to you in a direct-marketing model. That has never been done up until now, and it is a hybrid that is unique and at the cutting edge for the future—thanks to Ken Brailsford. We maintain empirical standards here, and qualitative assurance of our actual raw materials that are to those standards. We grow to an organic standard from our own sourcing, to make sure that the assayable nutrients are there in each and every lot of *Moringa* that we use.

The *Moringa* is used by indigenous populations where it grows equatorially around the world. But generally, they wouldn't get the nutrient value because they would cook it, and take all the nutrient values out of it. So what you have that is fundamentally unique to Zija is a product that is enzymatically alive and active, meaning we have not altered the nutrient profiling of the plant.

But if you happen to be, say, 250 lbs. and an ex-linebacker for an NFL team, is one dose a day going to do something for you? Probably not. You're going to have to take more just based on your body mass, your exertion level, etc.

We have approached the formulation of Zija from an ultra-conservative, ultra-safe, completely pristine, organic and natural approach to bring back what you're not getting in your food and beverage intake. This is not a quick fix. And will results happen overnight for each and every individual? It certainly will not. But over time, yes.

And we've seen this now with over tens of millions of dosages, where we're tracking compliance rates [efficacy] on Zija, at about 86 out of every 100 people reporting real results, within somewhere between 10 and 30 days, and sometimes 60 days. About the longest I've seen is 90 days before they're report something.

But as an empiricist, I ask the question, "OK, we've got this really high compliance rate—well, woop-dee-do! What about the other 14 percent? And when I went back and started investigating those, what was going on was they were either under-dosing, or they were expecting their correct dosage to compensate for a multitude of sins—like morning, noon and night at the fast-food joint!

So, I've never been around something with these high compliance rates, and all without adverse side effects! So, is *Moringa* and Zija the "real deal," to use your marketing slogan? Yes, it is. And the evidence is very hard and sustained over millions of dosages.

Which leads me beyond the Smart Drink and Smart Mix to our latest offering in the family of *Moringa* products and that's XM3, which stands for Extreme *Moringa* 3. What we're talking about are XM3's three component parts: appetite control, true kinesiological energy, and pure nutrition from the

Moringa. In poll after poll in America and western societies today, there are two indices that people keep asking for. One is to have more energy, and the second is appetite control, or dietary control to maintain a slimmer profile.

No one in retail beverages—and they're out there by the dozens now—is truly delivering on that. What they're really delivering are highly caffeinated products, or highly neuro-sensor-stimulant products. These do harm, and do not truly assist in terms of sustained blood glucose for real physical energy, or mental alertness and clarity, or for creating ketosis, the burning of fat, or appetite control—let alone the absorption of true nutrient value that one gets from *Moringa oleifera*.

So I encourage you to take a look at XM3, which may be another opportunity for yourselves, your family, friends and colleagues. With XM3, we are delivering naturally occurring caffeine found in leaves, beans and fruit, not synthetic caffeine, and at a low level, maybe one-third of that found in a normal cup of coffee. We're delivering generally recognized-as-safe desert tea, used by Native Americans and pioneers for hundreds of years, FDA approved, and with no issues of harmful alkaloids like the things that were banned, and have nothing to do with the *Ephedra Nevadensis* category.

In XM3 we also have: green tea that has a long history of satiety benefits [feeling full]; fruit pectin for anti-carcinogenic as well as cholesterol control; TMG [Trimethylglycine], an organic compound from plant roots that also assists with appetite control; ginseng, with its long herbal history for weight issues, metabolic energy and calmness; and finally *Allium Sativum*, which is known from a cardiovascular and regulatory standpoint to be very safe and beneficial.

I try to build things that are safe and all natural, that are honestly efficacious, and that cannot harm, which is fundamentally different from a lot of things one sees in the marketplace. With that, I've given you an overview of where I came from, and how I got involved with this.

I'd like to end on a personal note, and tell you the story of my wife's experience with Zija. As you may have guessed, I'm the ultimate "doubting Thomas." I buy my own Zija for myself, and my wife had apparently rifled some out of my study, and had started taking two cans a day. At that time, she was at 145 lbs. and a severe arthritic, to the point that she had virtually no mobility in either of her hands. I joked with her that she could barely sign her name to a check—which might be a good thing from a husband's standpoint! But I came home one day, and she had full dexterity!

So, I said, "Gee, what new medicine have they got you on?" Because they had her on the things that have now been banned, that would numb the pain and reduce some of the swelling, but certainly didn't give her mobility. And she said, "Oh, I'm taking some of that green stuff from your office." And my immediate reaction was, "You know, I pay good money for that for myself—I don't get it free!" And she, being a prudent and frugal woman from Italy, cut back to one can a day, and the arthritis that had been completely eradicated came back! So now she's on two a day.

She has subsequently lost about 20 lbs. and still has full dexterity. But for her, in her circumstances, at age 43, five-foot-two, originally 145 lbs., two cans had worked, while one didn't. So that's why I say, it depends on your circumstances. To use an old slogan, "Your mileage may vary!" But we do see these very high compliance rates. And it was the law of unattended consequences—I never thought my wife would be an actual user, or that Zija would improve our own lives, and hers so radically! ■