

Bananas About Fruit: Chiquita thinks outside the bottle – David Eichhorn writing sample

This is an article I wrote on behalf of Brand Engine for Package Design magazine, describing the branding and package design for a new product. I was given the “Original Outline” that appears first below, then conducted some brief interviews with the design team, and after a few drafts, arrived at what follows.

ORIGINAL OUTLINE:

- Chiquita’s recently launched a new product category on shelf, ‘Fruit Crushie’. ‘Fruit Crushie’ is a new way to eat fruit: in a crushed, drinkable form that is more pure than a smoothie, quicker and more portable than actual fruit.
- With this new product offering, Chiquita wanted to accelerate its evolution from a produce company to a fresh fruit snack company.
- Brand Engine’s challenge was to successfully introduce the new product in a new category, while embracing and retaining Chiquita’s brand heritage.
- Through our discovery and strategic process, we defined the core target, the connected mom. By focusing on the connected mom and reaching out to her beyond the marketplace/store, Chiquita was able to remain relevant in a new product category. We can share internal development materials to help illustrate our process.
- Results: In test markets, Fruit Crushie performing at triple the projections.

NEAR-FINAL ARTICLE DRAFT:

Every banana aspires to be a Chiquita, but what if Chiquita wanted to be known for more than great bananas? As brand designers, we relish the opportunity to help a well-known company launch a product that extends the brand into new market territory.

With their new *Fruit Crushie*, Chiquita took a bold step into the competitive fruit snack market, with a drinkable 100% crushed fresh fruit snack in a single-serving bottle. The concept tested well and proved itself capable of creating a whole new niche between fruit snacks and fruit beverages.

With product development complete, Chiquita sought the expertise of Brand Engine, a brand strategy and packaging design firm based in Sausalito, California, to help conceptualize the *Fruit Crushie*’s position in the marketplace, develop the brand story and complete the packaging design. The only requirements were to work with their proprietary 100% recycled plastic bottle and to draw upon the Chiquita heritage of delivering freshness and taste.

Before design exploration can begin, Brand Engine completes a discovery and strategy phase to understand the market, identify the target customer and establish the product’s core essence. Three questions are answered: Who am I? What am I? and Why am I right for you? Will Burke, co-founder and CEO of Brand Engine, knows from experience that, “the sooner in the process you answer these three questions, the clearer the product offering and the more successful the results.” With the Who, What and Why answered, the package designer’s work has clear direction.

Who I Am: I am part of the Chiquita heritage of bringing fresh produce to your table.

With the *Fruit Crushie*, Brand Engine first had to understand its potential and what made it unique. Like the banana, the *Fruit Crushie* is a perfect snack—tasty, refreshing and easy to consume. It’s not just a beverage, but a way for people to eat fruit differently in a transportable, drinkable form.

The Chiquita brand was already well established and the main strategy concern was how to differentiate this product from other fruit snacks while bringing something new back to the Chiquita brand. Through the exploration of a range of design concepts, the clear winner was the one that embraced the brand's banana yellow and iconic blue Chiquita sticker. "Even though we had a lot of creative leeway," says Burke, "it made sense to tap into Chiquita's strong brand equity, especially when done in a new and refreshing way."



We were on the right track, however it turned out that the product formulas did not all contain banana. While leading with the brand's heritage, it seemed disingenuous to sell consumers on a product that did not contain Chiquita's most famous fruit. "They had a great product and the idea was innovative—no one had done this in the category," said Burke, "but brand recognition was predicated on making a connection to the banana. Without that connection, the design falls apart. You can't use the banana motif and blue sticker if you don't have banana in your product."

Asking a client to reformulate its product at this point in the process is not approached lightly. Brand Engine worked collaboratively with Chiquita to explore this option, eventually convincing them that adding banana to each of its flavors would solidify the product's positioning and bring it instant credibility. With the new formulations, product and package worked together to deliver on the Chiquita promise.

What I Am: I am a 100% crushed fresh fruit snack.

Our key design challenge was to tell a visual story that positioned Chiquita as more than a banana company, while creating a clear sense of flavor, freshness and delight. The visual metaphor of bottle-as-banana, peeling back to reveal whole fresh fruits, clearly illustrates what's inside, while bringing a dose of fun to the "what am I" story. The whole fruit illustrations and graphic elements such as the "100% Crushed Fruit" message further reinforce the idea of drinkable snack rather than just drink.



Chiquita had given the product a working title of "Fruit Freshie," but our team kept coming back to the crushed aspect of the product. Unlike other fruit drinks, Chiquita's formula took whole fruit and crushed it, creating a mixture of juice and tasty fruit bits. It was this unique attribute that set the product apart. The final design carries our proposed name "Fruit Crushie," instantly conveying the product's distinct advantage over other fruit beverages and snacks.

Why I'm Right For You: I'm a convenient and healthy way to satisfy your hunger for fresh fruit.

In order to create packaging that connects with our target customer, we need to understand what matters to her. In the case of the *Fruit Crushie*, we were speaking to the active, health-conscious mom who wants to be sure her kids get enough fresh fruit.

Package graphics and communications would need to illustrate how Chiquita's product would meet her lifestyle: offering all the health benefits of fresh fruit while eliminating its short shelf life, promising a refreshing taste that ensures kids will finish it and packaged in a convenient serving size that makes it a natural for school lunches and on-the-go snacking.

The size and shape of the bottle, its price point and its placement in the produce aisle were already working for us in communicating "right size at the right price." We crafted graphics and messaging to clearly communicate delicious taste and health benefits while letting the brand personality come through. Chiquita's blue, glossy emblem inspires trust in quality, and its placement at different angles across the product line gives it a hand-placed look, further reinforcing that farmers had a role in getting the product to the table.

The *Fruit Crushie* project demonstrates the potential for heritage brands to successfully leverage their DNA in new categories. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of collaboration; working together Brand Engine and Chiquita were able to strengthen the product's positioning, establish its brand personality and create its authentic expression on package. In test markets, the *Fruit Crushie* is crushing its projected success at a ratio of 3 to 1... exactly the kind of success that Chiquita and Brand Engine envisioned.



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