

WATER FALL

Y Water takes Manhattan

words : anna carnick



When great design inspires healthy living, there's not much more we can ask for. Y Water's perfect union combines a cool and kid-friendly, 100% recyclable bottle with removable, biodegradable labeling and a flavored, vitamin- and mineral-rich, low-sugar, organic beverage. Once empty, the container becomes a toy that kids can link to other bottles through biodegradable, connectable rubber "Y knots," letting them create spaceships, animals, robots, or whatever else their imaginations can dream up. When all is said and done, parents can log onto www.ywater.us and receive a free mailer to send the bottle back for recycling.

The cheery Y-shape inspired the drink's name, a playful riff on two of the most commonly asked kiddie questions: "Why?" and "Why not?" As Y-Water designer Yves Béhar says, "The brand, the bottle, the graphics, the name ... everything is one, connected by the idea of giving a smarter, healthier and much more fun experience. The category is so bland, so un-original ... but kids are open-minded to new and creative things, and that is what we wanted to give them."

Introduced just over a year ago, Y Water is the passion project of Thomas Arndt, former brand manager of Carpe Diem (the parent company of Red Bull energy drink). Frustrated by the lack of healthy beverage options in the market for his own two sons, Arndt decided

to create his own. He quit his job, risked his savings, and submerged himself completely in the Y Water world. Arndt partnered with Dr. Olga Padilla-Zakour of Cornell Institute of Food Science to come up with the perfect drink, and brought in Béhar and his celebrated fuseproject studio to brand and design the product.

Several months later, the gamble appears to have paid off, with honors from the likes of *ID Magazine*, *Spark* and the Global Water Innovation Awards, plus a permanent spot in the Art Institute of Chicago's collection. And Y Water has found homes not just on supermarket shelves, but also in toy stores. Its most important target—kids and parents—seem to agree as well.

This fall, Y Water joined forces with the New York City LAB Middle School in Chelsea, collaborating on a new pilot nutrition program—the first of its kind between a New York City school and a corporate partner. The goal: To educate parents, teachers and students on how to make positive choices and incorporate healthier foods in their lives. Says Arndt, "The opportunity to ... raise awareness about healthy choices has been my mission for Y Water from the beginning." Only time will tell, but for now, there's one thing we can all agree on: Y Water's kid-, environment- and design junky-friendly style floats inside and out.

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