



October 2014 Dinner Meeting Recap

Thanks to Dr. Devin Peterson from the University of Minnesota for speaking at our most recent CSIFT Dinner Meeting! We had a very nice evening at the Doubletree in Oakbrook and an interesting presentation covering alcohol flavors. Dr. Peterson's presentation covered a few specifics on how to modify liquor and other alcoholic beverages to remove much of the harshness and bite that is often associated with straight liquor and especially lower quality or cheap liquor products.

One of the most interesting points that came up was what is perceived as a smooth alcohol taste and very palatable is often in direct correlation to the pH of the product. In a Global Consumer Tasting event, the most preferred and highest rated Vodka was called Zyr. It is a Russian Vodka that costs about \$30 a bottle. Zyr has a pH of around 8. Conversely, when tasters sampled products with a lower pH such as Skol, Dimitri, and other less expensive brands they found that the pH in these products was between 3 & 4. Some of the other name brand Vodkas such as Grey Goose and Belvedere rated in the middle of the Taster Panel's preference and also had a pH that was closer to 6.

By drawing this correlation between the pH of different Vodkas and the perceived quality and flavor of them you have an interesting concept. The higher the pH the better the Vodka, the smoother the product, and the more money a customer could potentially pay. So, what happens when you take a Skol Vodka with a pH of around 3 and modify it using food grade base acidity ingredients? Why the Skol Vodka that was reserved for college parties is suddenly very smooth and loses much of the acidity and harshness that it is so well known for.

If you'd like to try this at home you can do so safely and simply. Buy a small box of Baking Soda (pH 8.4) and add a table spoon of it to a bottle of cheap Vodka. Stir it and let it sit for about 2 days. The Sodium Bicarbonate will act as a masking agent for many of the volatile compounds found in the Cheaper Vodka and will also increase the pH making it much more palatable.

Thanks again to Dr. Peterson for the interesting talk and looking forward to seeing you at our next meeting. Cheers!

Glenn Bluemer
CSIFT Chair-Elect