

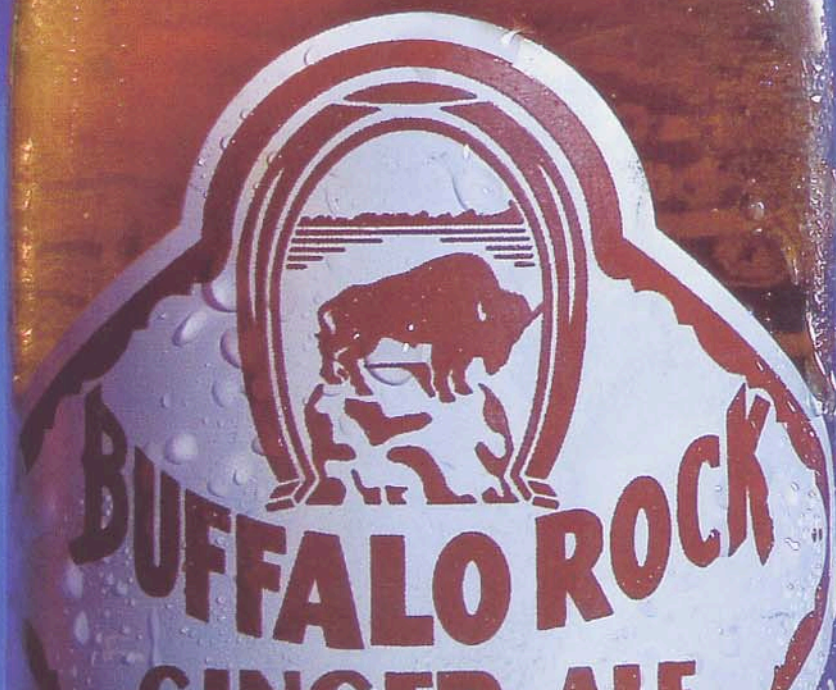
BUFFALO ROCK

Forget pale, watered-down ginger ale. This is the real stuff. Birmingham's best-known beverage is dark, strong, powerful, and not intended for use by wussies.

Buffalo Rock Ginger Ale was first developed in 1901 by Sid Lee as the result of an experiment to find a relief for stomach ailments. Bottled by the company that shares its name, Buffalo Rock has been a constant in convenience store coolers and supermarket shelves for over 100 years, and according to the product information on the company's Web site, www.buffalorock.com, many still insist that it helps relieve minor stomach problems, such as motion sickness. Buffalo Rock still packs a pretty good wallop, but we wish the company—and other soda bottlers—would scrap the aluminum can and bring back the classic glass bottle.

Snack Time!

From Grapico to Golden Flake, the Magic City's foods and beverages have put us on America's snack-food map. Put that in your sweet tea and sip it. BY LOYD MCINTOSH PHOTOS BY LIESA COLE



GOLDEN FLAKE

The story of the first potato chip goes back to 1853 in Saratoga Springs, New York, where George Crum, a chef at an upscale resort, became exasperated by a customer who had sent two orders of thick-cut French-fried potatoes back for not being thin enough to his liking. Crum, seeking revenge on his prickly diner, cut his potatoes paper thin, fried them within an inch of their lives, and dumped so much salt to make them—he thought—incredible. But his plan backfired. His guest loved the crispy chip, and a national snack sensation was born.

Seventy years later, Mose Lischkoff and Frank Mosher founded the Magic City Foods company in the basement of Hill's Grocery. The company took off and was already a favorite when one of the greatest partnerships in history was forged. Football fans all over the state could see Alabama football coach Bear Bryant snacking on Golden Flake chips every weekend on his television show, ensuring Golden Flake as the chip of choice for generations of Southerners.



RED DIAMOND LEMONADE

A quick word about lemonade. First, lemonade should never, ever be pink. (Has anyone ever seen a pink lemon?) Secondly, truly good lemonade should have very few ingredients: lemon juice, water, and sugar. Thirdly, lemonade should be purchased whenever possible from some cute neighborhood kids sitting behind a cardboard lemonade stand. However, in the absence of these pint-size entrepreneurs, your local convenience store or supermarket will suffice. Birmingham's Red Diamond Corporation—most known for their tea and coffee products and coffee slurped in business offices all over the south—bottles a pretty darn good lemonade. It's sweet but with plenty of lemony sourness to go along. So, grab a bottle, find yourself a good book and a nice shade tree, and pucker up.

MILO'S TEA

According to popular mythology, the first cup of tea was discovered by accident almost 5,000 years ago in ancient China. As the story goes, the Chinese Emperor, Shen Nung, also a scholar and herbalist, was relaxing under a tree while his servant was busy boiling water. A leaf from the tree dropped into the water, and Shen Nung decided to try the brew.

In the centuries that followed, the tiny tea leaf has stirred up the passions among explorers, trade merchants, and rulers of nations. Wars have even broken out over the stuff—remember your Civics lessons about the Boston Tea Party—Alabamians are passionate about their sweet tea, particularly Milo's Tea. The Birmingham-based hamburger chain began selling its particularly sweet concoction in 1989, and what family reunion or backyard barbecue would be complete without a plastic gallon jug? You might just start a war if you don't bring enough for everyone.

ALLIGATOR ICE

The first frozen soda was invented in the 1950s when Kansas native Omar Knedlik began freezing soft drinks at his local Dairy Queen. There have been dozens of brands of frozen beverages sold at convenience stores over the years. But now, a Hoover-based company has joined the fray and, so far, has hit a winning formula. Gerald Smith started the company in 1995, and now Alligator Ice machines are in convenience stores in 48 states. Not content to offer the same old fruit flavors, Alligator Ice has interesting choices including creamy orange, French vanilla cappuccino, and pina colada in stores across America.



