



ELS ICED COFFEE

# ICED COFFEE

WITH A KICK



## CAYCE KERR: HELPING RETAILERS MAKE A HOLE IN ONE

By Teddy Durgin

**A**s a caddie to such golfing greats as Fuzzy Zoeller, Fred Couples, and Ernie Els, Cayce Kerr has been all over the world. But it's his foray into the beverage business that brought him back to his home state of Maryland this winter.

Together with PGA Professional Golfer Ernie Els, Kerr has launched Els Iced Coffee. Available in three flavors: original, chocolate, and mint chocolate, the new line boasts its key ingredients as fresh cream from a dairy in Wisconsin, chocolate from Hershey Pennsylvania and ... (wait for it) ... alcohol. In fact, Els Iced Coffee is the first such product available in this country with a 12.5 percent alcohol by volume (or ABV) content. Kerr was back in the Old Line State

to introduce the product and offer tastings at various locales.

He had been raised in Clinton, Md., and held several jobs in the packaged goods and tavern businesses as a younger man. "I worked at Branch Avenue Liquors," he recalled, "and I worked at Bar 51. Bar 51 was on Suitland Parkway and Nailor Road, and I was the nighttime manager there making \$7.50 an hour. So, I got familiar with the beverage alcohol business at a young age, and I definitely got familiar with Maryland."

Kerr recalls how this venture all came about. Early in 2017, Els was in a meeting in Florida with his management team. On the side, Kerr had dabbled in chocolate wine and had been creating samples of an iced coffee drink that he was eager to show off. So, he decided to have the meeting attendees give it a try. Els loved it so much that he eagerly put his name on it.

With Els Iced Coffee, Kerr is bringing to market a product that has appeal to a broad spectrum of customers. Kerr has been convincing retailer after retailer of the diverse reach his product has with his in-store tastings. "In every store I've been to, I break records of number of bottles sold," he explains, citing examples of stores where many hundreds of Els Iced Coffee bottles will sell in several hours' time. "When people try it, they buy it. When I'm in a store, I'm a monster."

*Beverage Journal* publisher, Steve Patten concurs, "I visited Cayce at two of his tastings in late December and early January. He is electric. I watched bottle after bottle head to the register after customers would have a small taste and a brief conversation with Cayce."

The product debuted in Wisconsin and has since expanded to 21 states as of the first



Made in the United States



available in **3 flavors!**

- ICED COFFEE
- ICED CHOCOLATE
- ICED MINT CHOCOLATE

Call Cayce Kerr at 714.612.3204 to order now.



CAYCE KERR CONDUCTS A TASTING OF HIS ELS ICED COFFEE AT FOUNDRY WINE & SPIRITS IN OWINGS MILLS, MD.

quarter of this year. Kerr remarks, "I wanted to be the first to bring iced coffee with a kick to the industry. I handle procurement, distribution, sales, marketing, and depletion. I go into the retailer. That's my favorite thing to do. Last Saturday, I was at a Wegmans in Fairfax, Va., and sold 21 cases and three bottles."

While Kerr loves to take the product out into the market, he acknowledges it can be a bit of a nerve-racking experience. "When you're doing a sampling at a store," he stated, "you have maybe eight seconds to grab their attention. So, you better be good. I love it when a person takes a sip and rolls their eyes back. They don't have to say anything at that point. Their expression says it all. Then, they look at you and ask, 'How much is this?!' The next thing you know, they're leaving in another direction with your product."

He continued, "I get a lot of 'Oh my goshes!' But it's not really what they say. It's the voice inflection. They're pleasantly surprised. And my most common response to them is, 'How many would you like?' When you can provide happiness and a smile in a short period of time and introduce them to a product they never anticipated leaving the store with, that's cool!"

He added that one of the most common questions he gets when showing off Els Iced Coffee is: "When do you drink it?" He remarked, "Customers have told me they drink it in the morning. They love it for brunch. I've also heard of it being served after dinner for dessert. And some like it as a nightcap."

Looking ahead, Kerr is hopeful the brand will continue to grow. He concluded, "My vision is to try and continue growing the brand in 2018, expand distribution, and get as many people as I can aware of the product, the flavor profile, and the price." ■



CHRIS LOMBARDI, SOUTHERN GLAZERS WINE AND SPIRITS; AND CAYCE KERR CONDUCT A TASTING OF ELS ICED COFFEE AT TOTAL WINE & MORE IN LAUREL, MD.