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td4999



Coca-cola largely removed the cocaine from its formula in 1903, more than a decade before it was made illegal- why did they do it? Were there negative associations with cocaine at the time? How did its removal affect the drink's popularity?



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4.7K



109



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dissertation) that note " Originally the Coca-Cola formula called for coca leaf extract containing roughly 3/2001h of a grain of cocaine per serving, but company president Asa Candler decided to eliminate the miniscule narcotic content by 1903 **in the face of growing consumer fears about the adverse health effects of cocaine addiction.**" (emphasis mine, p.131). Concerned about taste, however, the company replaced this with "decocainized coca leaves" and kola nut extract, which was internally called "Merchandise #5." The sourcing of this material-- really a waste product of the cocaine processing industry --is the focus of the book chapter, following the author's pattern of one chapter for each of the major ingredients (water, sugar, caffiene, etc.)

Later in the book Bartow notes that there was no real reason to keep the coca byproduct (deconainized leaves) in the formula except to maintain the "secret formula" recipe, stating that "there seemed to be no real material use for the coca extract other than to protect the company's brand image." They just wanted to keep the word "coca" in the product name. He draws heavily on Paul Gootenberg's [Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug](#) for the context of this chapter. One interesting factor is that Coke did not own plantations in Peru or processing plants, so was buying on the wholesale market. By the 1880s there was so much global demand for coca that the security and price of that supply came into question, so by removing coca from the product (except for the near-valueless "decocainized" leaves) the soft drink company was lowering its costs and severing its ties to the licit coca market.

In an article that summarizes the arguments of his book, Bartow writes about FBN (Federal Bureau of Narcotics) files which "...reveal how Coke worked with the FBN to secure exclusive access to legal coca imports into the United States after 1914 when the federal government criminalized coca trafficking. The FBN approved special exemptions in federal counternarcotics legislation allowing Coca-Cola to contract with the Stepan Chemical Company in Maywood, New Jersey, to purchase decocainized coca leaf extract, or coca leaf fluid leftover after cocaine processing. The FBN, however, aggressively denied other applicants seeking legal coca imports into the United States, including many rival soft drink companies. By restricting buyer access to coca leaves, the federal government helped to create a monopsony for Coca-Cola, thereby keeping prices for this exotic ingredient down. " See Bartow J. Elmore. "Citizen Coke: An Environmental and Political History of the Coca-Cola Company." *Enterprise & Society* 14, no. 4 (2013): 717-731. <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.

As for the response among consumers, I'd suggest looking at *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola* by Mark Pendergrast. I don't have a copy at hand but recall it covers the formula, consumer demand, and the rise of Coca-Cola in this period in great detail.

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sunagainstgold • 7y ago • Edited 7y ago

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- [How potent was the coca extract in the original Coca-Cola and other coca products? Did people get addicted and have withdrawal reactions when the ingredient was removed? What about other good/bad responses?](#)

(If it's not clear - I've modified the title of the thread in the link to give you an idea of what info you'll be getting that's related to *this* question. Cheers!)

↑ 508 ↓ ...

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mimicofmodes MOD • 7y ago • 📌 Stickied comment • Edited 7y ago

Hi, everybody! So, you've probably clicked on this thread because it has so many upvotes and you assume that means there's an answer - but that's not how [r/AskHistorians](#) works. In general, people upvote threads here because they *want* an answer. The thing is, [it can often take time for a good answer to be written](#). Our mission is to provide users with *in-depth and comprehensive responses*, and our [rules](#) are intended to facilitate that purpose. That's why we remove comments that are very short, based on speculation, or just plain inaccurate. Making comments asking about the removed comments simply makes the problem worse. So please, before you try your hand at posting, check out the [rules](#): we don't want to have to give you a temporary ban for ignoring them. **At the time I'm writing this, about 30% of the removed comments are just talking about comments, 10% are low-effort answers that just quote or summarize a paragraph from another source, and 45% are a discussion of racism in America.** In other words, you are not missing out on the content you presumably subscribed to this subreddit for.

While you wait, you can check out places our already-answered questions are featured, including [Twitter](#), the [Sunday Digest](#), the [Monthly "Best Of"](#) feature, and now, [Facebook](#). Statistically speaking, it's very likely that the question will be answered in a few hours, so please check back in later. If you think you might forget, send a [Private Message](#) to the [Remind-Me bot](#), and it will ensure you don't!

Finally, while we always appreciate feedback, we ask that any comments about our moderation style and rules be sent to [modmail](#), or a [META thread](#). Please be aware that we've considered and discarded the idea of an "answered" flair and an automatic "free talk" comment thread many times already. Thank you!

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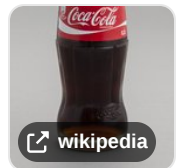
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[r/todayilearned](#) • 5 yr. ago

TIL Coca-Cola's formula still includes extract from the coca leaf, the source plant of cocaine, the original stimulant in addition to caffeine. Imported from Peru and Bolivia, the...

9K upvotes · 333 comments

[r/SnapshotHistory](#) • 6 mo. ago

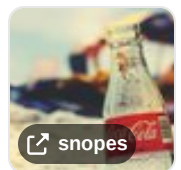
This is first publicly sold bottle of Coca-Cola released in 1894. It contained an estimated 3.5 grams of cocaine.

1.2K upvotes · 118 comments

[r/todayilearned](#) • 4 yr. ago

TIL Coca-Cola didn't become completely cocaine-free until 1929.

472 upvotes · 61 comments

[r/AskHistorians](#) • 12 yr. ago

How much cocaine was in the original coca-cola, and what would its effects be?

12 upvotes · 10 comments

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322 upvotes · 81 comments



r/interestingasfuck • 4 mo. ago

This is the first Coca-Cola bottle sold to the public, launched in 1894. Surprisingly, it contained approximately 3.5 grams of cocaine at the time.

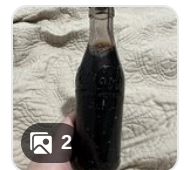


2K upvotes · 351 comments



r/Antiques • 2 yr. ago

The forbidden Coca Cola to drink? or not to drink?



515 upvotes · 125 comments



r/okbuddydraper • 1 yr. ago

Apparently Coca-Cola was a real soda company.



480 upvotes · 25 comments



r/BeAmazed • 5 mo. ago

Coca-cola, one of the first bottle from 1890s



108 upvotes · 27 comments



r/AskHistorians • 8 yr. ago

It is well known that the original formulation of Coca Cola contained extract from the coca leaf and was marketed as a health tonic. How potent was it? Did it actually have appreciable medicinal properties of...

411 upvotes · 15 comments



r/FuckImOld • 8 days ago

40 years ago today, Coca-Cola changed its formula and introduced New Coke, which was overwhelmingly hated

104 upvotes · 79 comments



r/northernireland • 1 yr. ago

Have they put coke back in coca cola....

60 upvotes · 154 comments

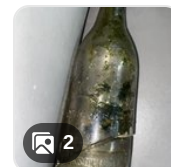
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17 upvotes · 4 comments



r/mudlarking • 3 mo. ago

Turn of the century Coca Cola !



106 upvotes · 6 comments



r/AskHistorians • 7 mo. ago

Why did coca not spread in the same way as tea and coffee did, despite being introduced to Europe at a similar time?

141 upvotes · 6 comments



r/victoria3 • 6 mo. ago

Just a casual 159 year old coke addict



1.6K upvotes · 44 comments



r/chemistry • 1 yr. ago

Chemical Formula for Cocaine mixed with Uranium-235

31 comments



r/etymology • 5 yr. ago

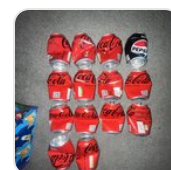
Cocoa, cacao, cocaine, Coca-Cola, chocolate... someone please connect the dots!

36 upvotes · 18 comments



r/ShittyRestrictionFood • 2 mo. ago

coke



78 upvotes · 7 comments



r/vegan • 4 yr. ago

Is drinking coke vegan?

3 upvotes · 7 comments

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caffeine). It was removed in 1903.



13 comments



r/FuckImOld • 7 days ago

On April 23, 1985 (40 years ago) Coca-Cola introduced New Coke.



62 upvotes · 34 comments



r/AskHistorians • 4 yr. ago

What happened after they took the cocaine out of coca cola?

638 upvotes · 18 comments



r/ColorBlind • 10 mo. ago

Is Coca-Cola red? Has it always been red?



31 upvotes · 28 comments



r/TooAfraidToAsk • 1 yr. ago

How is it legal for Coca-Cola to be labeled as “original taste” when they removed the cocaine from its original formula which contributed to its taste?

318 upvotes · 96 comments

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