

# A blast for banks as cherry champions taste success



GOOD HEALTH: John Heseltine and Martin Hall, of Cherrygood



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TASTING cherry juice while on holiday in America gave former Sheffield University student John Heseltine the idea to introduce the fruit juice to the UK.

"I first came across fresh cherry juice while I was on holiday in America. It tasted great. And I thought people back home would love it too," says John, who, with business partner Martin Hall, from York, launched Cherrygood Ltd 14 months ago.

Cherrygood is the UK's first ready-to-drink cherry juice and has just reported a turnover of £1.2m in its first year of operation. It is listed in all the major supermarkets.

With the help of \$1m of research into the benefits of Montmorency cherries, which make up Cherrygood, they identified that tart cherries have health benefits.

Cherry juice contains higher levels of antioxidants than pomegranate, blueberry, grapes and cranberry juice drinks,

Martin, 47, who met John at a drinks fair in London, says: "Cherrygood is a fantastic healthy fruit juice drink, perfect for all the family. People have told us they like it for its powerful combination of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals and the fact it tastes great."

Before launching Cherrygood, John, originally from Middlesbrough, ran the successful Lovejuice chain of branded juice bars.

After getting the company off the ground with its Cherry Original and Cherry Berry, they have just launched a new product called Original Cherry Light. This is a low-sugar version

for the calorie-conscious consumer.

And they are expanding overseas. Because of the phenomenal success in the UK market, the company has been approached by an ever-increasing number of companies who would like to start distributing Cherrygood in many new European territories.

The company is now selling directly to a leading distributor in both Greece and Cyprus and has also entered the Spanish market.

Despite their success, John and Martin have launched a scathing attack on Britain's banks, blaming a lack of support from the high street banks as hindering their rate of growth and worldwide expansion plans.

"Getting a small business off the ground is not the easiest thing to do in this economic climate. We went to all the high street banks for support but they were all dismissive of our idea. Every single one turned us down," explains John.

"We needed £500,000 to launch the business and, despite having successfully launched and sold a previous fruit juice company, no-one was interested in backing us.

"We knew we had a great idea and we refused to give up. It's that belief and optimism which makes a business happen. So, we found an industry veteran who invested in us, and Martin and I put the rest of the finance in ourselves."

Their success is all the more remarkable considering the storm that has hit the juice and smoothie market. After two years of falling value and volume sales, miserable summers and soaring input costs caused by poor fruit harvest and the weak pound, the carnage is manifest. Sales of juices and smoothies have fallen by £114m in the past two years.

"We are breathing life into the juice market with the only brand of cherry juice available in every supermarket in the UK, as well as lots of other places," adds John.

"Our aim is to become a mainstream global family brand."

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