

From Non-Alcoholic Beer to Zero-Sugar Malt

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As India's beverage landscape undergoes a rapid transformation, driven by a health-focused shift, Ghodawat Consumer Limited (GCL) is pushing the boundaries of innovation with the launch of Coolberg Diet, the country's first zero-sugar malt-based beverage. Building on the success of Coolberg, India's pioneering non-alcoholic beer brand, the new variant aims to redefine guilt-free refreshment for a generation that seeks flavour without compromise.

To understand the vision, R&D journey, and strategic significance behind this category-first innovation, NUFFOODS Spectrum spoke with Salloni Ghodawat, CEO of Ghodawat Consumer Limited. In this exclusive interview, she shares insights into consumer trends, the science behind formulating a sugar-free malt beverage, GCL's expanding beverage ambitions, and the growth potential of the Coolberg Diet portfolio.

What inspired GCL to enter the zero-sugar malt beverage category with the Coolberg Diet?

At Ghodawat Consumer, we are constantly listening to evolving consumer preferences, especially the rising demand for healthier, low-calorie beverage options. The idea for Coolberg Diet stemmed from a gap we identified: while there are numerous sugar-free colas and sodas, India didn't have a zero-sugar malt-based beverage that delivered on both taste and health.

Coolberg Diet is our answer to that unmet need, a crisp, flavourful alternative that stays true to the malt profile while keeping the sugar out. It's also an extension of Coolberg's pioneering journey as India's first non-alcoholic beer brand, pushing the boundaries of category innovation once again.

How does the Coolberg Diet align with 'better-for-you' consumer trends?

Consumers today are far more label-conscious and actively seek out beverages that support a balanced lifestyle. With the Coolberg Diet, we're tapping into that intersection of flavour and function. It's a product that offers the familiarity and

experience of malt without the sugar overload, catering to young adults, Gen Z, and health-conscious consumers who want a beverage that complements their active routines, social occasions, or mid-day cravings without guilt.

What went into the R&D process for the Coolberg Diet?

Crafting a zero-sugar malt beverage was a complex process, especially given malt's naturally strong flavour profile. We collaborated closely with food technologists, brewers, and global ingredient partners to develop a formulation that maintains a smooth, malty body while balancing sweetness with non-artificial alternatives. Multiple blind taste tests and trials were conducted to ensure the product delivers on mouthfeel, aftertaste, and flavour stability. The end result is a clean, crisp drink that consumers can't believe is sugar-free.

Who is the core TG for Coolberg Diet, and how is it positioned in the market?

Our core audience includes urban millennials, Gen Z consumers, fitness enthusiasts, and anyone looking to cut down on sugar without compromising on taste. Coolberg Diet is positioned uniquely, not as a replacement for colas or juices, but as a premium, flavour-first alternative that fits into the modern Indian lifestyle. Whether it's served chilled at a house party, stocked in office fridges, or bought via Q-commerce after a workout, it becomes a versatile go-to.

How does this launch fit into GCL's broader beverage strategy?

Coolberg Diet is a strategic extension of our beverage portfolio and our commitment to category leadership. GCL's vision is to create a future-ready beverage portfolio that straddles indulgence, wellness, and functionality. With Coolberg Diet, we've unlocked an entirely new consumption space within malt-based drinks, one that's clean-label, flavour-forward, and format-flexible. Yes, there are plans to expand the Diet range further across flavours, formats (like cans), and potentially into infused wellness or functional beverage territory.

What are your expectations for the market response and future growth?

The early response to the Coolberg Diet across Q-commerce, modern trade, and our sampling initiatives has been extremely promising. We expect it to significantly grow the base for malt-based drinks in India, especially among health-focused consumers. Our ambition is to establish Coolberg Diet as the go-to non-alcoholic, zero-sugar premium drink, one that becomes as much a part of wellness conversations as it is of casual consumption moments. With expanding distribution and the right brand-building efforts, we believe Coolberg Diet can unlock an opportunity of Rs100+ crore in the next few years.

Shraddha Warde

Shraddha.warde@mmactiv.com