

Client: Margo's Bark

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[Barq's, or Was It Margo's Bark?]

It sounded a little too much like a Nickelodeon sitcom to be tasty. Local 7-year-old Oscar Youd decides to make root beer for his school science fair at St. James School Episcopal School in central L.A. He wants to learn firsthand how yeast and sugar magically bubble and burp into soda. Nothing out of the ordinary there.



Flash forward to after the commercial break, when Oscar receives rave reviews on his vanilla-scented, cane-sugar-and-molasses-sweetened elixir from science fair attendees, inspiring his parents to commercially brew the root beer. But first, there are numerous family outings with the five Youd kids to tour soda factories and taste dozens of root beers (talk about a brilliant family bonding activity). When they finally settle on a formula, they name it Margo's Bark after the family dog and decide to give all – yes, 100% – of the profits to local puppy-love charities, such as the [Brittany Foundation](#), an Agua Dulce-based dog rescue organization, and [Bark Avenue](#), a downtown L.A. advocacy group that aims to reduce pet euthanasia through spay/neuter programs. Plus, the [Margo's Bark](#) homepage flashes with adorable adoptable pets via Petfinder.

This stuff could have as much flavor as diet cola and still sell. But Margo's Bark is actually good – really good. Beneath all that caramel-y flavor from the molasses, it is redolent of vanilla, with a hint of nutmeg and clove. And it's not too sweet, like so many commercial sodas.

Margo's Bark is a bit pricey at \$1.70 to \$2 for a twelve-ounce bottle, depending on whether you pick it up at Bristol Farms or pricier joints like Whole Foods (it's also available at Owen's Market, Larchmont Larder, Joan's on Third, Tender Greens and a few pet-friendly places like LA DogWorks and Urban Pet). But it's hard to complain about a couple of extra pennies when you see Oscar's black lab-pit bull mix, Margo, smiling back at you on the label (the Youds found her abandoned in a Long Beach parking lot). And that Margo might, dare we say it, make an even tastier root beer than good old IBC (dunno just yet - more taste testing required, preferably with copious scoops of vanilla ice cream).

Want to try your hand at making root beer? You can buy soda-making equipment at most home brew shops like the [Home Beer, Cheese and Winemaking Shop](#) in Woodland Hills. But first, follow the Youd family's lead and take a tasting trip to [Galco's Soda Pop Shop](#) in Highland Park. You'll find walls and walls of hard-to-find imported and stateside brews (soda and beer) in the former local grocery store turned bubbly beverage mecca, plus an impressive collection of old-school candy spread out in the former dairy case.