

Client: Margo's Bark

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Up Front

How Oscar Youd bottled his science project into a family business.
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Youd Family: Tim, Jessica and dog Margo back up Oscar and the root beer business.

Inspiration Straight From Lab

Boy's science project yields root beer brand named for family dog.

School science projects are often spoofed for their gooey messes and exploding brews of household chemicals.

But for 7-year-old Oscar Youd, the result was a lot sweeter: a new line of natural, microbrewed root beer.

Eighteen months ago, for the annual science fair at St. James Episcopal School in Los Angeles, Oscar and his family made 120 bottles of root beer in the kitchen of their Hancock Park home.

The soda, which was brewed using a kit, surprised everyone.

"People came up and said 'This is great, you should sell

it,'" said Oscar's father, Tim Youd, 42.

The result is **Margo's Bark Soda Co.**, producer of Margo's Bark Root Beer, which went on sale at several stores last month. Named after Oscar's dog — a black lab-pit bull mix rescued by the family — the micro-brewed soda is made from molasses and natural cane sugar without preservatives.

When the company finally breaks even, Tim Youd said, all profits will be donated to animal rescue organizations. "It's a family project," he noted.

It may be a while, however, before that happens.

After the initial success at the science fair, the Youds worked with a professional flavorist and sank \$25,000 of their savings into research and development.

For nine months, the family — including five children ages 7 months to 21 years — gathered weekly around the

kitchen table to sample new formulas. After finally agreeing on the winning combination, they ordered more than 4,000 bottles — at 85 cents apiece — from a Northern California brewer.

The product, which sells wholesale for \$1.05 a bottle with a suggested retail of \$1.35, is already available at several L.A.-area restaurants including Tender Greens and the Larchmont Larder. It also can be purchased at the Potato Chips sandwich shop, and upscale pet shops such as the Urban Pet and LA Dogworks.

Just last week, Tim Youd said, the family got its biggest deal yet when Bristol Farms agreed to carry Margo's root beer in all 13 of its Southern California stores.

As for Oscar, the attraction is simple.

"I like that you can put ice cream in it," said the boy, who has been a longtime root beer fan.

—David Haldane