



## Coke Lore



### Coca-Cola® & Sampling

Free Samples Spurred Early Growth  
Hard to believe today, but there was life before soft drinks.

In fact, the first big challenge for Coca-Cola® was to get people to try a sip. The solution-free samples-was the precursor of today's multi-million dollar product launches.



### New Drink, New Idea

Giving product away was a novel notion in the late 19th Century, and it worked. Free samples caught the public's attention and gave Coca-Cola momentum.

According to early reports, distribution of sampling coupons on the streets of Atlanta was one of the first marketing efforts made by the pharmacist who invented Coca-Cola, Dr. John S. Pemberton. His bookkeeper, Frank Robinson, used a city directory to mail coupons to leading Atlanta citizens.



In the 1890s, led by the new owner of The Coca-Cola Company, Asa Candler, the concept of sampling was advanced and expanded. An aggressive marketer, Candler had his employees hand out "complimentary tickets" for Coca-Cola, which was then sold only at soda fountains. Candler was confident his refreshing concoction would find an appreciative repeat following-if folks would try it just once!



### One in Nine

Distribution of coupons became a systematic component of the Company's marketing to drug stores. Most were mailed or handed out by Company salesmen, and occasionally they appeared in magazines. The Company also gave soda fountains enough free syrup to cover the complimentary servings.

For 20 crucial years, 1894-1913, free sampling played a central role in establishing the popularity of Coca-Cola with the public. During that span, nearly 8.5 million coupons were redeemed by the Company. Approximately one of every nine Americans had enjoyed a free drink.



### 120 Years Later

Today, the Coca-Cola system is still introducing new brands as well as innovative forms of packaging. Encouraging consumers to try them is as vital as when Coca-Cola was just coming on the scene-so coupons and sampling programs remain important tools in marketing Coca-Cola products.