

# Odwalla shake debuts as healthy quick meal

By **ROBIN MUSITELLI**  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Odwalla Inc. took to the streets Tuesday with its answer to breakfast skipping, lunch-hour shrinking, time poverty — "Future Shake."

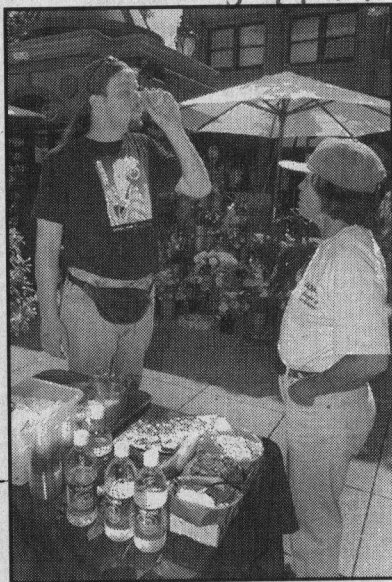
"Think of it as food, not a drink," said Sydney Fisher, who stood in front of Bookshop Santa Cruz to promote the new drink, Vanilla Al'mondo Future Shake.

Designed to be a meal in a bottle, the \$2.99 drink is Odwalla's entry into the booming, \$1 billion meal replacement business. But unlike other products that use additives and flavorings, the Future Shake is made with only whole, natural foods, said Fisher.

The company, founded in Santa Cruz, hopes to satisfy converging consumer desires for convenient, yet healthy foods. At the same time, Odwalla hopes the new product will help restore the financial health of the company, which has been wrenched after health officials linked the products to an outbreak of E. coli bacteria last October in several western states. Sixty people were sickened and one Colorado girl died.

The company has reported losses of more than \$9.3 million for the first half of this fiscal year, and has spent about \$3.8 million on the recall. Overall losses based on expected revenues are about \$25 million, Odwalla Chairman Greg Steltenpohl previously estimated.

Although under consideration for several years, the new shake was launched as a "post recall" product that has a consumer message of "nourishment beyond juice," said Fisher. Unlike the apple-juice based, unpasteurized drinks associated with the E. coli outbreak, the new soy-based drink is pasteurized. Since the outbreak, the company has begun flash pasteurizing all its products that con-



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Passer-by Jim Hughes was tempted to taste Odwalla's new shake on Pacific Avenue.

tain apple juice.

The Vanilla Al'mondo was stocked in stores last week. A second flavor, Mocha Motion, is due out by the end of the month.

The Vanilla Al'mondo, a creamy blend of almond, soy, organic oat milks, real Madagascar vanilla, banana and mango, is a sweet concoction that tastes somewhat like vanilla wafers. It has 370 calories, 47 grams of carbohydrates and 14 grams of protein in 16 ounces.

"I like it. I can taste the almond," said Stephanie Tufts, who tested a sample. "I don't know if I would replace a meal with it, but I would drink it as a snack."

Deliberately, it's not green. Research shows that while the idea of drinking a meal has become more mainstream, a lot of people are turned off by "superfood" products that are green, said Odwalla's Stacy Kelly. "We designed this to be much more accessible," she said.