Lorie Hutson

Jun. 21--It's not your average cuppa joe.

Most of the food panel members couldn't even tell it was supposed to taste like coffee. Before the carbonated coffee soda Coca-Cola Blak was unveiled, tasters guessed it was flavored with Dr. Pepper or some kind of fruit. No one liked it much. It received an average of two stars for flavor and one star for value.

"What is this? The mix of flavors makes them all undefinable," said Skip Hubbard. "All I know for sure is that it's soda and not a very good one."

Larry Inman seconded: "Not a pleasant taste. I wouldn't buy this. I predict a total failure in the market, especially considering the exorbitant price."

The 8-ounce bottles are sold in a four-pack for $7.99. The "carbonated fusion beverages" are sweetened with a mix of high-fructose corn syrup and aspartame and served chilled.

The flavors really confused the taste buds of some panel members.

"I can't figure out the fruit, but there is a cream taste -- tastes a bit like root beer," said Marcia Oranen.

Even those who guessed the flavors weren't inclined to buy.

"I have no idea what this is, but it tastes like Coke with coffee. I'm not sure that is necessarily good," said Tina Johnson.

Coca-Cola Blak

Price: $7.99 for four 8-ounce bottles

Nutrition per serving: 45 calories, no fat, no protein, 12 grams carbohydrate, no cholesterol, no dietary fiber, 30 milligrams sodium.

Taste: -- --

Value: --

Comments: "Far too sweet. A mouthful of flavors that don't necessarily mesh." -- Peggy Kazanis

"I taste coffee, Dr. Pepper and way too much sugar. I'll pass." -- Vicki Deschaine

"Thin nose, dense flavor, modest carbonation -- really odd, but worth trying ONCE." -- Andy Hoye.

"All these drinks have carbonation to deceive your taste buds." -- Marilyn Moore