



Baby carrots take on junk food with hip marketing campaign

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By **Bruce Horowitz**, USA TODAY



Artist rendering by Crispin Porter + Bogusky

This proposed look for baby carrots packaged in Doritos-like bags and sold in vending machines is part of a new marketing campaign that takes aim at the junk food business.

Name a snack food that's neon orange and makes a loud crunch when munched.

If you picked Cheetos, the nation's biggest producer of baby carrots wants you to think again.

Just in time for the battle over what's gonna be in millions of back-to-school lunches, Bolthouse Farms and nearly 50 other carrot growers today will unveil plans for the industry's first-ever marketing campaign. The \$25 million effort sets its sights on a giant, big-spending rival: junk food.

The \$1 billion baby carrot world — hit by the recession following years of growth — is taking on the \$18 billion salty snack food industry by trying to beat it at its own hip marketing game.

Imagine baby carrots:

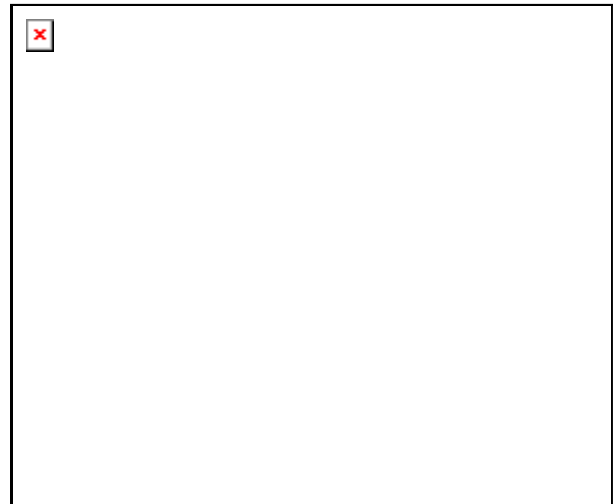
- Packaged in Doritos-like bags. Three different designs are planned.
- Sold out of cool school vending machines. Tests are underway in Cincinnati and Syracuse, N.Y.
- Sporting slogans like this on billboards and packs: "The original orange doodles."
- Touting seasonal tie-ins. Coming this Halloween: scarrots.
- Offering a phone app powered by the sound of folks munching carrots in real time.
- Airing TV spots that tout baby carrots as extreme, futuristic and even, yes, sexy.

"It's not an anti-junk-food campaign," says Jeff Dunn, Bolthouse Farms CEO and a former North America president at [Coca-Cola](#). "It takes a page out of junk food's playbook and applies it to baby carrots."

The agency behind the campaign, Crispin Porter + Bogusky, is known for outside-the-box concepts. It created [Burger King's](#) viral marketing hit "Subservient Chicken" and the anti-smoking campaign [TheTruth.com](#).

"Carrots don't have all the news that junk food comes with," says Tiffany Rolfe, group creative

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director at Crispin. So, Crispin's job is to create news.

Ad psychologist Carol Moog says kids may be disappointed to find all the flashy ads are really just for carrots. She says they need to make carrots more fun — like, perhaps, putting an orange (but natural) dusting on carrots that mimics Cheetos.

Consultant Kate Newlin says she wants to like the idea. She loves the fact that carrots are the color of Cheetos and make the crunch of Doritos. But she says she is not quite buying the premise of carrots mimicking junk food. "The guilt is missing," says Newlin, author of *Passion Brands*. "I don't think [Frito-Lay](#) will be trembling."

Frito-Lay, in fact, is crowing.

"We're happy to serve as an inspiration," spokesman Chris Kuechenmeister says. "We know people don't eat enough fruits and vegetables. We applaud any effort to provide consumers with a wider range of snacking options."

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