

The Tastebud Challenge

In all the years *Practical Sailor* has been testing products, we've never led a taste test—until now. For this look at the best options for staying hydrated on the water, we conducted a taste test of multiple flavors of coconut water from two manufacturers, California-based Zico and Florida-based EQ Hurricane Juice.

Both companies market fruit-flavored coconut waters, and Zico sells a “Natural” flavored version, which has nothing added to it. Zico also offers passion-fruit and mango-flavored coconut waters, while EQ sells mango-pineapple, lemon-lime, and tangelo.

The products all have similar nutrition facts and ingredients lists, which include citric acid and natural flavors.

The EQ Hurricane Juice uses natural cane sugar to sweeten the drinks, while Zico adds no sweetener at all. Another difference between the products is in the production methods. EQ uses reconstituted coconut water while Zico uses “flash pasteurization”—often called high-temperature short-time processing—to process the coconut water.

The Test: We conducted a blind taste test with eight people, including men, women, and children. The drinks were assigned numbers for judging and poured in numbered cups. Each participant rated the drinks solely on taste.

The Findings: Testers preferred the all-natural Zico and the

PS VALUE GUIDE		COCONUT WATER TASTE TEST	
	FLAVOR	RATING	PRICE / TESTER COMMENTS
ZICO	NATURAL ✓	Excellent	\$1.75; refreshing; nothing added
	MANGO	Good	\$1.75 / sweet
HURRICANE JUICE	TANGELO	Fair	\$2.50 / smells good
	MANGO-PINEAPPLE	Good	\$2.50
	LEMON-LIME ✓	Very good	\$2.50 / tastes like Gatorade

✓ Recommended

EQ Lemon-lime flavored coconut water, which several said tasted just like lemon-lime Gatorade. The other flavors were fruity, testers noted, but not that tasty. The least favorite was the EQ Tangelo, which reminded some testers of that powdered orange drink once so prevalent at school and Scouts events.

The Bottom Line: A taste test can never be definitive, but it was a fun experiment. Based on the palettes of the eight people tested, we recommend the Zico Natural and EQ Lemon-lime. The Zico is less expensive and comes in an easily compactible waxed box rather than a plastic bottle, which takes up more space in a locker or the trash bin.