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Raising the style bar

MARKETING | Drinks fashioned to appeal to ladies who club

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A company called Cocktails by Jenn isn't shorting on the pretty.

Cocktails by Jenn invests big time in packaging its martinis to appeal to women, and has been helping to gussy up Chicago women via complimentary salon services. The hope is that the women will pick their cocktails with the same care they pick their clothes and makeup, and spread the word about the drinks.

Club Jenn is the venue: a Lincoln Park pop-up pre-party preening and martini lounge that has operated for three weekends, and closes Saturday.

Having acquired the brand in October 2005 for \$6.8 million, and expanded its distribution by 80 percent — to about 30 states from five — Chicago-based Barton Brands Ltd. is using the store that regularly operates as Salon Michael, at 1939 N. Lincoln. Barton Brands hopes to generate buzz about the 34-proof cosmopolitan, blue lagoon, apple and lemon-drop flavored vodka martinis, and get them into more outlets.

Brand manager Lori Logan said "Jenn" is the fictional embodiment of women aged 25 through 45 juggling career, philanthropic and social calendars and maintenance of relationships with girlfriends and family.

Think Betty Crocker, only more barfly.

"We think everybody's got a little Jenn in them," Logan offered.

Could just as easily have been "everybody's got a little gin in them," considering the attention



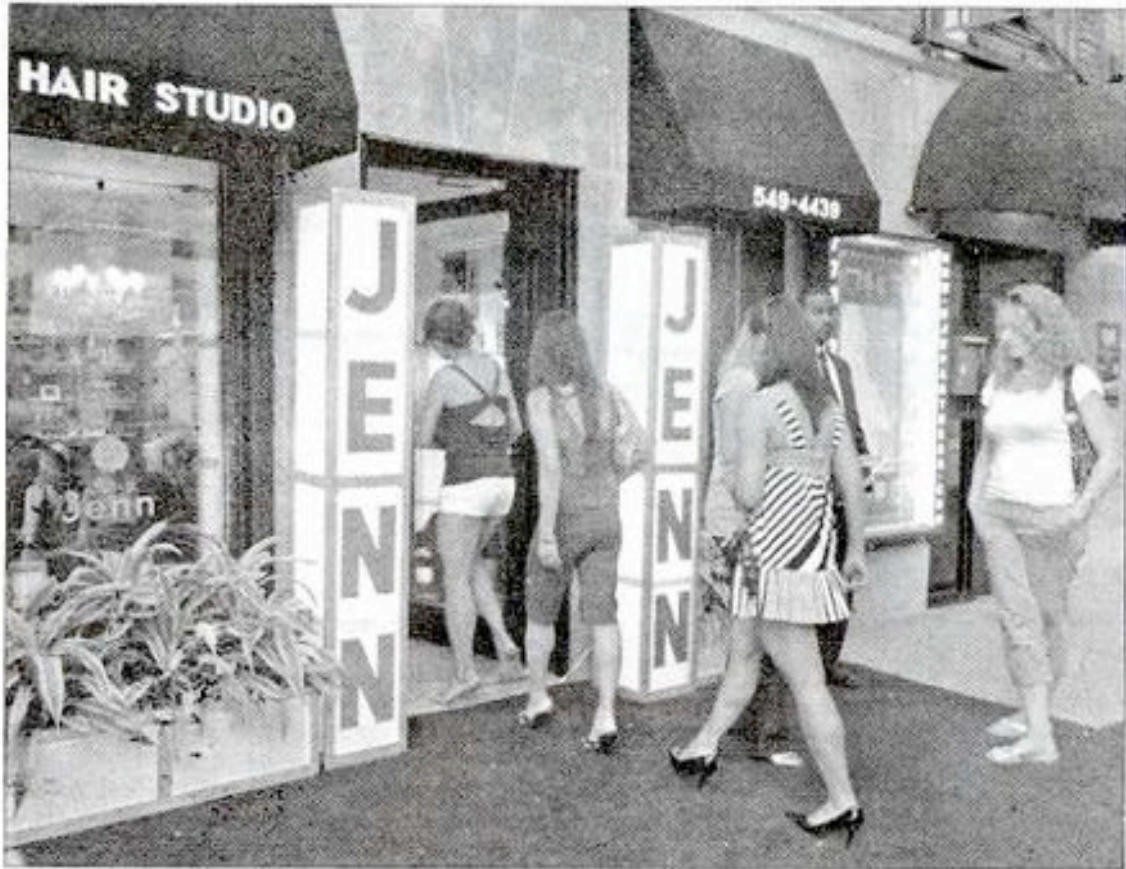
Amy Houck of West Lafayette, Ind., gets here hair done by Michael Cunningham, owner of Salon Michael, during a Club Jenn event this month. Cocktails by Jenn has a line of pre-mixed drinks and flavored vodkas (top).

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COCKTAILS BY
jenn™



ABOVE: Women arrive earlier this month at Salon Michael, 1939 N. Lincoln Ave., for an event at Club Jenn., a store that pops-up for a brief time in an existing venue.

RIGHT: Inside, Ida Plaza (left) and Agnes Cha of Skokie enjoy a drink and take pictures of themselves in the salon's lobby. The "club" is a collaboration between Barton Brands' Cocktails by Jenn and the salon, operating Fridays and Saturdays through this weekend. | DOM NAJOLIA-SUN-TIMES PHOTOS



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STYLE | Carrie Bradshaw and friends helped level drinking field

the booze industry is paying to women, who account for about 55 percent of U.S. wine purchasers.

Jenn martinis are among the growing ready-to-drink cocktail category, an offshoot of the "malternative" beverages carrying more fruity flavors that appeal to women. Barton, which already is home to the Chi Chi's line of prepared cocktails, increased distribution of Jenn by about 80 percent, expanding availability to 31 states from five, but axing the seasonal key lime and chocolate peppermint flavors. Information Resources Inc. ranks the brand No. 13 in sales in the category, which has been criticized for appealing to underaged drinkers.

Cosmo-swilling Carrie Bradshaw and company are among players who helped make booze more stylish for women, said Jeffrey Kline-man, editor of Beverage Spectrum magazine.

"There's the post-'Sex in the City' boom that's indicated that certain mixed drinks are particularly appealing to women," Kline-man said. "There's the idea that's pretty well established that a woman can belly up to the bar, or slink up to the bar, in a cool dress and a cool pair of shoes and order a cool drink other than a more traditional glass of wine or beer or whatever a date supplies."

One testament to the trend is the popularity of events that mix manicures and martinis.

Chicago-based prettycity.com, a salon and spa service-promoting Internet site, receives about 125 inquiries a week from Chicago area



During a recent Club Jenn event at Chicago's Salon Michael, stylist Piret (left) manicures Constance George's nails while George's friend Chelsey Lindstrom waits. | DOM NAICLA/SUN-TIMES

residents looking for spas at which to host parties, founder Carolyn Brundage said.

Created with the help of about 20 women contracted by original owner, Majestic Brands, Cocktails by Jenn relies heavily on packaging to capture women's attention. The slim, single-serve bottles come with straws, and are adorned with charms with emblems of all things girl — shoes,

martini glasses, hearts, hand bags, cell phones, among them. The four-packs being encased in a plastic tote reminiscent of a purse reinforces "the whole shopping, fashion, sharing — things that are just important to the modern woman," Logan said.

Interior designer Erik Kolacz, who repped Chicago on Bravo's "Top Design," helped to transform the Tuscan-inspired Salon

Michael to the Miami-esque primping station/club, which can handle about 60 women a night.

Women can reserve appointments (jenn@cocktailsbyjenn.com) for themselves and buddies to get free services (hair, makeup, nails) and try the cocktails before getting complimentary limousine lifts and VIP entry to Landmark and Stone Lotus nightspots.