

# Old cigarette ads seem so quaint, but things haven't really changed all that much

They've been banished from offices and dinner parties and sent packing from California restaurants, bars and outdoor sports stadiums. Scorned and rebuked, smokers now practice their habit in private or in little knots of rain-spattered comrades, like members of some forbidden sidewalk sect. Congress, meanwhile, is moving in for another blow against the lawsuit-battered tobacco industry. A bipartisan bill introduced earlier this month would place strict new regulations on cigarette ads and other forms of marketing, especially those that target young people.

Anyone who thinks this signals that smoking and the industry that fuels it are on the way out ought to

pop that Golden State bubble and think again. Consider, in recent news, last week's Supreme Court decision to overturn the \$79.5 million in punitive damages an Oregon court had ordered Philip Morris to pay a smoker's widow. The ruling was widely seen as an important and perhaps precedent-setting win for the tobacco industry.

And then, on the style front, there's the unveiling of the coy Camel 9, a new R.J. Reynolds cigarette dressed up in pretty-in-pink Camel insignias and pink foil and tucked into a downtown-fashionable black box. The product launch, advertised in *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue* and other magazines, is ostensibly aimed at adult women. But can

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**Camel 9, a new R.J. Reynolds cigarette aimed at women, is dressed up in pink.**

there be any doubt that it's young female "starter" smokers, so alluring to Big Tobacco, that the ads for this "light & luscious" product are meant to entice? About 90 percent of all smokers begin lighting up by age 18. After trending downward for years, youth smoking ticked up slightly in 2005, according to Joseph Califano, president of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse. About 1 in 4 U.S. teens now smoke by the time they graduate from high school.

Even the apparent capitulations of the tobacco companies are often canny recalibrations. The introduction of Camel 9 follows Reynolds' semiretreat from youth-enticing fruit-flavored cigarettes last year.

The company agreed to stop marketing those products under kicky candy, fruit and alcohol names (Twista Lime, Winter Mocha Mint) while keeping sweet cigarettes on the market under other names. Meanwhile, fruit-free female-targeted brands like Eve, Misty, Capri and who knows how many iterations to come live on as the 21st century offspring of Virginia Slims. You've come a long way, baby, right back to where you started. If one idea doesn't fly, another's always waiting on the runway.

In one of Big Tobacco's more unnerving gambits, the companies proudly sponsor campaigns that counsel kids not to use their prod-

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