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From left: Tom First, Jacoby Ellsbury, and Ming Tsai at Soundtrack Recording Studios in Boston. (Bill Brett for the Boston Globe)

The Drink is on Ellsbury

By Mark Shanahan & Paysha Rhone

It's not for a lack of electrolytes that **Jacoby Ellsbury** is struggling at the plate this season. In fact, the Sox centerfielder's on-base percentage might be even lower if not for the new drink he's endorsing. Ellsbury signed a deal with owater in the spring, and the phenom's flavor - strawberry-pomegranate - has finally hit stores. "I'm going to get behind a product, I need to believe in it, and I do," No. 46 told us the other day while recording an owater ad. This is the rook's first endorsement deal with a beverage company, and he's picked a proven winner. Owater was founded by **Tom First**, who made a mint with Nantucket Nectars. (He sold the company to Cadbury Schweppes for tens of millions of dollars in 2002.) Investors in his new initiative include **Kevin Garnett**, chef **Ming Tsai**, ex-NFL star **Tiki Barber**, Hall of Fame QB **Steve Young**, and Bank of America exec **Chad Gifford**. First, who describes himself as fitness-obsessed, said Ellsbury is the ideal dude to endorse his brand. "You always try to match the person with the goals of your company," he said. "And Jacoby's an exciting player." (We could stand it if he was exciting and productive.) So why strawberry-pomegranate? Tsai had something to do with that. "One thing I do have is a palette," said the chef, who became fast friends with First while watching the Sox at Fenway. "But Tom took the lead. I'm just a lowly cook."