



by ELISABETH CUNEO, Associate Editor

ALCOHOL BEVERAGES

TOASTING A TRIO OF TRENDS

Alcoholic beverage packaging developments flow from trends including eco-friendliness, on-shelf distinction and indulgent luxury.

It's no surprise that when we talk about market trends with packaging, sustainability is a topic that comes up, and packaging of alcohol is no different. Companies are searching for ways to make their packaged products "green."

As alcohol manufacturers strive to differentiate their brands from competitors, one wine company is seeking sustainability with a change to its bottle material, from glass to lightweight polyethylene terephthalate (PET).

Sutter Home Family Vineyards is the wine industry's leading producer of single-serve, 187-mL wines. Some of the brand's success can be contributed to the U.S. winery's major packaging switch from glass to lightweight PET bottles from Amcor Rigid Plastics. The company has switched its entire 187-mL production to the plastic containers. The bottles preserve the look of the original glass container and run on the winery's existing glass filling line.

A unique barrier coating technology developed by Germany's KHS Plasmax GmbH affords the 187-mL PET container the same shelf life as glass. And according to Sutter Home, PET containers are one-sixth the weight of glass bottles, unbreakable, less wasteful and recyclable.

It's not just PET receiving attention for being eco-friendly in alcohol packaging; glass is making the packaging landscape greener, too.

Owens-Illinois (O-I) introduced a portfolio of Lean+Green bottles designed to be attractive, durable, and lighter weight. Partnering with The Wine Group, O-I utilized its Lean+Green products to create a new glass wine bottle package that was lighter in weight and easier to transport than the current package.

The 750-mL Oak Leaf wine bottles are 27% lighter than the previous bottle, have a slightly different design on the neck and the bot-

tom punt of the bottle was removed to reduce weight.

The new bottle eliminates more than 8 million pounds of packaging weight, saves 3,492 tons of carbon dioxide, uses 280 fewer trucks to transport and eliminates 6,100 pallets used in distribution for every 31.6 million bottles. This carbon dioxide saved is the equivalent of reducing the travel of one semi-truck by more than 2 million miles or the carbon dioxide absorbed by more than 145,200 trees.

Other alcohol segments are also incorporating eco-friendliness into their containers. Famous Grouse scotch whiskey is releasing a lighter package weighing 340 g, a 14% weight reduction; this was not thought possible for premium spirit bottles. The prototype, developed by Edrington, is a technical first and will be tested in select supermarkets in Scotland.

Edrington's director of technical services, Mike Rose speculated that if the innovation was adopted by Famous Grouse, the product group would save more than 2,381 tons of glass every year. And if this was rolled out across the whiskey industry, it could save over 63,934 tons of glass annually.

Aim high toward luxury

Alcohol brand owners do a good job of using glamour, sex and luxury to entice consumers to purchase their products. Some liquor manufacturers are taking luxury up another notch to truly ap-



Russian Standard Imperia vodka features Swarovski crystals embedded in the cap for the ultimate in luxury.

Sutter Home PET bottles increase the 'green' factor and profit.





peal to those who value the finer things in life.

Russian Standard vodka is using Swarovski crystals in the cap of its *Imperia* vodka bottle. This exclusive, limited-edition of *Imperia*, named The Crystal Crown Edition, is a bottle adorned with 24 flawless Swarovski crystals that embody the purity of the *Imperia* liquid. The limited edition of just 20,000 bottles will be available worldwide in selected high-end hotels, restaurants and clubs as well as in premium stores, specialized spirits boutiques and international airports.

Finlandia vodka brand is also upping the luxury features on its new high-end bottle. Brown-Forman introduced its new high-end Finlandia Platinum Vodka to global markets. To finish off its refined 700-mL and 1-L bottles with a unique closure, it called upon Saxco Int'l, LLC, and its global resource network.

Employing the combined services of two of its vendors, Saxco Int'l created a matte silver aluminum shell embossed with the classic Finlandia reindeer logo. This part of the process was completed by Anomatic Corp. A special plastic fitment and natural cork assembly was added that fit directly into the shells. The use of metal instead of plastic in the cap increases the presence of the bottle in consumer's hands, with the added weight adding premium feel.

Just plain unique

Aside from addressing the environmental packaging concerns and launching a luxurious alcohol line, some companies are launching distinctive products to increase interest.

Take the Antique Wine Company's collection of giant bottles of wine called "Melchior's." The name

refers to one of the three wise men bearing gifts in biblical times and in the world of wine refers to the largest bottle of all, holding 18 liters, or 24 bottles in one. The bottle is sure to amaze any wine lover.

Sometimes smaller can be a plus, especially when that smaller package is highly portable and refillable, as in the CarboPouch from PPI Technologies Group. The patented "beer on the go" CarboPouch, with fitments, is available in two sizes, 9 and 64 ounces. PPI's website says the pouch "allows craft beer brewers to fill on-site, a clean, ready-to-go pouch with spout and cap." The pouch is an easy way to transport beer and a safe, clean and eco-friendly alternative to plastic cups for draft beer. Once filled, and kept refrigerated, the beer will keep fresh for five days.

Anheuser-Busch InBev's Bud Light has turned to Spear to enliven the beer's fun personality via a customizable, pressure-sensitive label that allows drinkers to add a personal touch. Incorporating metal activation technology and requiring, extensive testing, the end result is an exclusive area of the label on which consumers can customize their bottle. The innovative label can help avoid bottle mix-ups and offers the chance for individuals to exchange messages or phone numbers.

From eco-friendly to unique to luxurious, alcohol packaging all has one goal, increase sales. And as this part of the beverages market has proven to be recession-proof, I would say it's working. Cheers! **F&BP**



CarboPouch allows for easy transporting of draft beer.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Amcor

734-302-2515; www.amcor.com

Anomatic Corp.

740-522-2203; www.anomatic.com

The Edrington Group

+44 141 940 4000; www.edringtongroup.com

Exal Corp.

330-744-950; www.exal.com

KHS Plasmax GmbH

+49 40 67 9070; www.khsplasmax.com

O-I

567-336-5000; www.o-i.com

PPI Technologies Group

941-359-6678; www.ppitechnologies.com

Saxco International, LLC

215-443-8100; www.saxcointl.com

Spear

513-459-1100; www.spearinc.com