

# BeverageWorld

## Technology

### worth toasting

PACKAGING INNOVATION

A look at the packaging innovations that are changing the beverage world.

BY ANDREA FOOTE

**B**everage product innovations are getting a lot of attention these days. From Vanilla Coke to Michelob Ultra, the beverage world has its eye on new product categories that generate excitement and connect with consumers.

The truth of the matter, though, is that less than 20 percent of new beverage products last for more than three years. Fortunately for beverage marketers, although product innovations are more likely to miss than hit, packaging innovations are more likely to drive sustainable volume growth.

Over the past decade, advances in beverage packaging technology have changed the way that beverages are sold, where they are sold, when they are sold and, sometimes, even who they are sold to. Consider, for example, what the advent of hot-fill PET has done to increase sales of isotonic or what extended shelf life processing and packaging has done to expand usage occasions for fresh juice and milk drinks.

What new innovations are out there to help drive your beverage sales? Beverage World took a look at the market with an eye toward the most innovative and functional packaging offerings.

#### COOL BOTTLES

Regular attendees to packaging trade shows will say that the aluminum bottle is nothing new. And that's true, but after a start in the packaging-savvy Japan beverage market, the aluminum bottle is finally taking off in the beverage

market. Heineken is test marketing a version for use in nightclubs in France and several North American marketers are rolling out in sleek resealable aluminum bottles.

CCL Containers has put the technology it developed to create proprietary aerosol cans to work creating new aluminum packages for two Snapple Beverage Company products—Elements



and Mystic RE. Both bottles are shaped aluminum and incorporate a plastic neck and finish to accommodate the lug cap that is the closure of choice in the New Age beverage segment.

According to Ed Martin, vice president of sales and marketing for CCL, Snapple chose the aluminum bottle for its Mystic RE energy drink because the package's size and resealability worked with its plans to market the brand as an energy drink that offers twice as much volume to

consumers for the same price as drinks packed in the category's traditional slim can. The popularity of that pack led to Snapple's decision to move its Elements line out of glass and into its own proprietary aluminum bottle.

Offering both the quick-chilling benefits of aluminum and the resealability that is almost mandatory with today's on-the-go consumer, Snapple's director of packaging Susan Chirico says the aluminum can lends both products the cool image Snapple was looking for—that's cool as in "hot" and cool as in cold. "We were the first beverage company [in the US] to commercialize the concept of the resealable aluminum bottle with Mystic RE. Elements takes it a step further," she says. "Our packaging is a major component of our communications strategy and a powerful tool in defining our brands." Snapple even plays up the chilling benefits of the aluminum package with graphics that mimic frost and a tongue-in-cheek warning for consumers not to put their tongues directly on the metal surface.

Martin sees opportunity for the aluminum bottle in other premium-price beverage categories—particularly malt alternatives and beer, which could be marketed in longneck aluminum bottles that evoke the traditional beer bottle shape. Offering both resealability and a long shelf life, aluminum bottles could become the package of choice for use in the stadiums and outdoor venues where PET beer has carved a niche, Martin reasons.

[www.cclcontainer.com](http://www.cclcontainer.com)

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## A "CAN-DO" PACKAGE

Suppliers are developing innovative shapes and features for aluminum cans. BY HEATHER TODD

For the past few years, PET packaging has been the rave among beverage marketers for its capability to produce innovative bottle shapes and eye-catching designs. But, lately, an old, trusty stand-by of the beverage packaging world—aluminum cans—seems to be generating some excitement.

Aluminum packaging offers many benefits over PET or glass, including longer shelf life, faster chilling and better recycling capability, points out Bill Barker, president and CEO of Rexam Beverage Can Americas (Chicago, IL), a sector of Rexam.



Smirnoff Ice and Smirnoff Black are now available in slim cans.

"There's no other package that delivers comparable economics when you get to high volume," he states. "With cans, you get lower distribution and warehousing costs and much faster filling speeds. And, it is the only packaging material that more than covers the cost of collection and re-processing for itself."

Snapple executives were looking for a new package for their Mystic RE and Elements brand that would stand out at retail. They struck gold with Hermitage, PA-based CCL Container Aerosol Division's impact-extruded aluminum bottle.

Since converting the brand from glass to aluminum packaging, velocity for the brands, on average across all flavors, is up approximately 30 percent at a 15 to 20 percent price premium, says Maura Mottolese, vice president of marketing for the brands.

"In quantitative research we've done with consumers, we've found that the package is communicating about the

brand exactly what we want it to, which is energy, ice cold and cutting edge," she says.

The packaging makes a value statement about the beverage because it's resealable, shaped and retains coldness longer than glass and plastic due to the thermodynamic properties and thickness of the aluminum walls, explains Ed Martin, vice president of sales and marketing for CCL Container.

"What truly makes the package unique is that for the first time since PET a package material is a driver of beverage product sales," he attests.

CCL used an impact extrusion process, which requires a pure grade of aluminum, to create the bottle's distinctive shape. The bottle also incorporates a plastic neck and finish to accommodate the lug cap that is a common New Age beverage closure.

Shaping technology in traditional aluminum cans also is taking off. Philadelphia, PA-based Crown, Cork and Seal worked with Silver Arrow (London, UK), the marketers of Spiked Silver cranberry energy drink, to develop a sleek, shaped slim line container. The container's "waisted" format makes the package easy to hold.

Crown, which also developed the Heineken "keg can," used its proprietary high-pressure, blow-forming process to create the package. The process begins with preforms placed in precision engineered molds to create the desired shape. The preform is then blow-formed using high-pressure air, causing it to expand into the shape of the mold.

Neill Mitchell, director of marketing, Beverage Can Division, says Crown wants to expand its shaping technology to other product lines.



The Spiked Silver energy drink can has a "waisted" format.

"Shape can help differentiate your product and it can also go a long way to link your package with your brand identity," he says. "It adds shelf appeal and maybe some ergonomics."

CCL is exploring ways to bring shape to the entire length of aluminum packaging, rather than just the upper half, says Martin. The company also is developing Alumilite technology, which will allow packages to

have thinner walls yet still be able to be shaped.

Some beverage marketers are turning to cans to introduce a new package for their brands.

Rexam (BCA) is manufacturing 8-ounce cans for nutraceutical brand Joint Juice and Rexam Beverage Can Europe and Asia developed 300-ml slim-line cans for Smirnoff Ice and Smirnoff Black. Ball Packaging Europe (Ratingen, Germany) developed the first .53-liter widget can for Guinness Draught.



The Pop-Up Key Sweepstakes can.

Besides taking on new shapes, cans also provide innovative promotional features.

Riverside Technologies (Wilton, CT), the developer of the talking can technology, holds the patent and the tooling capabilities for a new Pop-Up Key Sweepstakes can. The company has the technology to create a replicated beverage can that incorporates a watertight compartment

that holds a key. When the can is opened, the key pops up through the can opening. As part of a sweepstakes campaign, the holder of the winning can could use the key to open a car, boat or vacation getaway home. **BW**

[www.cdcontainer.com](http://www.cdcontainer.com)

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