



Age concerns with plastic



Glass wine bottles or plastic wine bottles – which do you prefer?

While plastic bottles are rare, companies like Marlborough's Yealands and South Australia's Wolf Blass are using them.

Environmentalist Peter Yealands sees plastic as the way of the future and says Marlborough sauvignon blanc, which is best consumed young, is perfect for the light-weight, recyclable, energy-efficient containers.

Yealands Full Circle Sauvignon Blanc 2009 is bottled in plastic and is stamped with an 18-month best-before date.

All sounds good but new research by the French Institute of Vine and Wine Sciences has

found that white wine begins to oxidise within six months of being stored in plastic bottles.

My advice to purchasers of wine in plastic is to check the best-before date and drink within days of purchase, otherwise take heed of new research by wine scientists at Auckland University and store the wine in the fridge.

The scientists found that sauvignon blanc can triple its shelf life when stored in a cold environment.

A New Zealand Winegrowers spokesman says that most wine producers would not consider plastic because of the effect on the quality of wine over time. Lighter-weight glass

bottles are a more preferable option.

With glass the material of choice, one way for wineries to reduce the impact on the environment is to join the New Zealand Glass Packaging Forum.

The cost is a levy on every bottle sold that goes towards projects, research, infrastructure and educational programmes to increase glass recycling leading to a reduction in container glass to landfills.

Ascension Wine Estate at Matakana has become northern Rodney's first winery to join the forum.

"Reducing our impact on the environment has been a central theme of our business since we opened 10 years ago,"

says Ascension owner Darryl Soljan, winner of the Ministry for the Environment Green Ribbon for Sustainable Business and the 2009 winner of the Manaakitanga Award for Rodney's Most Sustainable Business.

"We worked with the forum for the first time at the outdoor Winery Tour concerts in February which resulted in every empty glass vessel being recycled.

"The short-term cost is a long-term investment for the country."

Innovative ways of recycling include crushing glass for use in sports turf and golf bunkers, water filtration, roading basecourse, sand blasting and erosion control.

Reducing our impact on the environment has been a central theme of our business

Ascension owner Darryl Soljan



Reducing impact, right: Ascension Wine Estate works hard to recycle its glass.



Levy for cradle to grave glass care

IF you buy drinks or food packaged in glass bottles or jars at New Zealand's supermarkets four out of five of the glass containers are subject to a voluntary levy to help ensure they are recycled when put in a recycling bin.

Few New Zealanders know of the voluntary levy but an overwhelming 92 per cent say they think all businesses should be taking this sort of product stewardship.

The lead by the Glass Packaging Forum has been recognised with the Minister for the Environment's seal of approval as a voluntary product stewardship scheme under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008.

The Forum was the first industry body in 2005 to introduce a levy on

members, who pay according to the amount of glass they manufacture or import, fill or sell in New Zealand and the Act now allows voluntary schemes to be recognised by the Government.

John Webber, general manager of the Glass Packaging Forum, says accreditation is an important signal to members that their funding is allocated to projects which directly meet the Act's criteria.

"Over the past five years members have raised more than \$1.6 million that has been spent on projects, research, infrastructure and educational programmes to increase glass recycling, and a reduction in container glass to landfill," he says.

"The glass scheme is

unique in packaging terms because it addresses cradle to grave impacts of glass containers from design to assisting with recycling them after use.

In the past year the Forum has directly contributed to recycling an additional 30,000 tonnes of glass which represents a fifth of all glass recycled.

The scheme, during its seven-year term, will:

- Measure the amount of glass packaging used by members and the amount of recycled glass being used.
- Target markets which have a high value for recovered glass and return glass for remanufacture.
- Allocate funds to consumer education and awareness, including public place recycling.
- Measure and seek to reduce the carbon footprint

of glass packaging.

It is important a level playing field is set for everyone, says Webber.

Schemes which fund end of life recovery systems (whether for glass packaging, agricultural wrap or paint containers) require funds raised by members' levies to meet the needs of 'whole of life waste avoidance' and to do less would not fully cover the expectations of the Act.

"When all businesses are looking to reduce their costs, our members continue to pay a significant amount of money to help make sure the glass packaging which they produce is recycled and not wasted. Gaining accreditation means we can target the companies which are free-riding on the back of them," he says.



Mixed glass concern

By DAVE BLANSHARD

CO-MINGLING of glass with other recyclable materials in New Zealand is an environmental “disaster”, says Glass Packaging Forum general manager John Webber.

And if the practice is not stopped New Zealand may find itself in the “ludicrous” position of importing raw material to make more costly new glass while thousands of tonnes of existing glass is used for lower value purposes, primarily aggregate.

The forum represents local manufacturers who pack their products in glass, and was established five years ago in response to government and public concerns about glass recycling in this country — including creation of so-called “glass mountains” particularly in the South Island.

It levies members to pay for research work and promotion of product stewardship.

“Few people understand that in addition to the 135,000 tonnes of glass consumed annually from local production, New Zealand imports approximately 60,000 tonnes of empty glass containers a year, mainly to meet the needs of beverage industries [wine, beer and other drinks sold in glass],” says John.

“That means that even with just 64 per cent of glass recycled there has been insufficient capacity to recycle all glass, so alternative uses have been found including crushing it for roading fill, use in concrete and in filtrates.”

The country’s only major glass manufacturer, Owens Illinois (originally Alex Harvey Industries), has recently invested \$84 million in a second glass kiln, substantially increasing its capacity.



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A TWO-part recycling bin being promoted by the Glass Packaging Forum.

“The company is now in a position to accept virtually all the recycled glass available in this country,” says John. “From an environmental point of view recycling is preferable to manufacturing new glass. It requires less energy (less pollution), and reuses valuable material.”

“So it is extremely unfortunate that in recent years there has been a move to co-mingling recyclable materials in this country. Where glass used to be sorted into three basic colours in the past it is now all lumped together in one bin in most cases. And while it is claimed glass can be optically sorted by machines that ability is not available here yet.”

John says the forum strongly campaigned against co-mingling when it was being introduced round the country by local authorities. But economic considerations and, “possibly overplayed” safety issues, carried the day.

“The public was sold the concept and people think they are doing the right thing. But it is not so,” says John. “We continue to lobby councils to reverse the irresponsible co-mingling process, and are involved in the development of divided bins which allow for glass to be kept separate.”

John says the cross-contamination process is also an issue with recycling of paper, plastics and cans.