

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

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A sustainable packaging solution for more than 200 generations, glass is experiencing a renaissance. Composed of abundant natural materials, it's a safe and healthy choice for food and beverage brands because it is chemically inert, meaning it doesn't interact with the products it houses. Its impervious nature also protects and preserves its contents, which increases shelf life. And technologies are being developed to enhance those natural properties by preventing UV rays, for instance, from passing through the glass and adulterating the contents.

But, beyond those benefits, glass is gaining favor from food and beverage manufacturers as a means to deliver on the increasing demand for innovation. In doing so, they are differentiating their brands, reinforcing the positioning of their products, and reinventing the very look and feel of the venerable material itself.

Current standouts

Consider Evian's collector series. When the brand was looking to re-launch collectible packaging in the early 2000s, it designed a glass bottle that symbolized the purity of the brand: a drop of water.

Five models have been released in the series since then—each one equal-



ly distinct. Made of flint glass, the bottles used a variety of decoration resources, from screen printing to satin finishes, to enact a unique effect.

Another recent standout is Longtail Libations' launch of Jekyll & Hyde—two liqueurs housed in glass bottles that nest on the shelf, reinforcing the complementary nature of the products and providing consumers with an unexpected element of delight.

For Smirnoff Signature's pre-mixed

Evian has used a variety of glass decorating technologies for its luxe collectible packaging. This one, shaped like a drop of water, is said to symbolize the "purity" of the brand.

vodka cocktails, Diageo designed a unique glass structure that intuitively communicates the positioning of its product. The brand's 750ml bottle is shaped and painted to resemble a silver cocktail shaker, with a whole body sleeve and a custom-designed closure to enhance the effect.

French beer-maker Kronenbourg also delivered a glass concept that reinforced the unique profile of its product. For its 1664 BLANC white beer, the brand went with an unconventional pressure vessel, developing a cobalt blue bottle to contrast

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against a crisp white label that reinforces the idea of "white beer" and creates a striking distinction between the empty and full parts of the container as the beer is consumed.

Glass of the future

There are even more exciting decorating technologies on the horizon, including internal embossing—the process of embossing a bottle on the inside to create a distinct decorative effect but, at the same time, to retain a smooth exterior surface for



The "nesting" property of these glass liqueur bottles reinforces the complementary nature of the products and creates an unexpected element of delight among consumers.

labeling. There's also a consumer benefit to the technology—it can help a brand make a memorable impact by surprising consumers when the internal design reveals itself as the product is consumed.

Other glass developments are designed to move total package solutions forward. Examples include plastic-closure-and-glass combinations like easy-open plastic flip tops on glass jars and canisters, and plastic closures for glass beer bottles that provide the benefits of improved tamper evidence and resealability for consumers.

The quest for lighter, stronger glass by many manufacturers is also leading to developments in the glass manufacturing process, including:

Improved surface treatments. These help reduce weight by preserving the inherent strength of glass and extending its durability.

Optimized computer modeling.

Computer models of mold shapes detect where excess glass can be removed from a bottle, which results in lighter weight bottles.

Such processes led O-I, for example, to a 20 percent weight reduction of a beer bottle for SABMiller – from 8.8 ounces to 6.8 ounces over six years.

This is an important development because energy consumption during the manufacturing process is proportional to the weight of the container. Lighter bottles consume less energy during shipping. And that's something brands can boast to consumers about as part of their stewardship of the environment.

Every gram of glass saved in lightweighting the container also results in cost savings, which might be a way for brands to free up funds and reallocate them to areas where they can make the most



Diageo designed a glass structure that communicates the "pre-mixed" positioning of its Smirnoff Signatures line. The 750ml bottle is shaped and painted to resemble a silver cocktail shaker.

impact: new product development and innovation.

And that's certainly crystal clear: if these examples are good indicators, packaging innovation—in glass and beyond—will continue to be a key driver in brand marketing, with the ultimate winners being ... consumers. **BP**

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