



# A RIVER OF REFRESHMENT

JIM PETERSON OF BALL CORPORATION  
LOOKS AT THE RISE OF THE CANNED BEER MARKET

As they tramp the banks for that day's perfect fishing spot along Montana's Bigfoot River in *A River Runs Through It* Paul calls out to his brother Norm: "You sank the beer, yeah?" Norm hollers back, "You bet your life." There's a friendly familiarity in the scene because in some form it's played out by most of us on fishing and camping trips, at beach parties, backyard barbecues, sporting events and just about everywhere else.

But it wasn't always the case. Beer in a can is celebrating its 80th birthday this year. When it was introduced in January 1935, beer drinkers were both intrigued and delighted. It was refreshing, portable and lightweight. In the ensuing decades, its universal bear hug from the public proves that when consumers recognise an exceptional innovation, that innovation often becomes part of the fabric of society.

The president and CEO of the Beer Institute, Jim McGreevy, says American workers and the US economy benefit from America's fondness for beer. "Each job in a brewery creates another 45 jobs in other industries, like can manufacturing. This long supply chain is important to communities across the country. Beer cans are a major part of the package mix of beer offered to consumers today."

Beer drinkers in Richmond, Virginia were the first to enjoy beer sold in cans when it was introduced there on 24 January 1935 following the end of prohibition in 1933. Since beer was introduced in

a can, both the taste and sustainability of canned beverages have improved exponentially, which is why consumers have come to appreciate the drinking experience offered by the can. And that explains why, according to the Beer Institute, in the United States, the aluminium beverage can market share continues to grow and now accounts for more than 54 per cent of all beer packaging.

"The enduring characteristics of the beer can protects the product's flavour and makes it portable, shatter proof, and it is even infinitely recyclable," says Can Manufacturers Institute (CMI) president Robert Budway.

## TASTE IS PARAMOUNT

In the US, beverage can makers Ball, Crown, Rexam and Metal Container, working through CMI (cancentral.com) launched its "Open Up to Cans" campaign earlier this year to promote the aluminium can as a superior package for speciality and premium beverages, based on new data regarding consumer sentiment. The goal of the campaign is to enlighten and inspire the beverage industry about the benefits of the aluminium can in four core areas: product taste, innovation, performance and sustainability.

The CMI research author, Grant Prentice, director of strategic initiatives at Food Minds, says, "Consumers enjoy their favourite beverages in cans, especially in key growth areas across the beverage industry, such as energy drinks and craft beers. They are also influenced by the 360-degree branding experience, taste integrity and infinite recyclability offered by the can, as well as new innovations in product packaging."

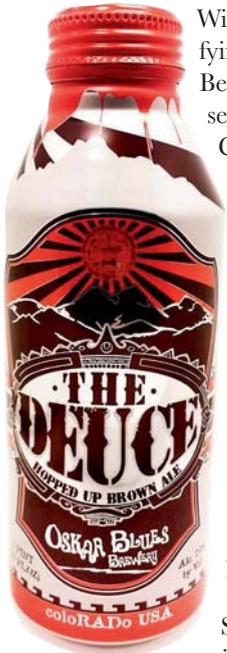
CMI has found that consumer and industry research clearly demonstrates the benefits of the aluminium beverage package.

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*Can Manufacturers Institute (CMI) president Robert Budway*

Top can benefits include:

- Retains freshness and carbonation
- Protects from air and sunlight – the two enemies of taste and freshness
- Preserves distinct flavours
- Maintains product integrity.



With cans you get refreshing, satisfying flavour when you pop the top. Because a drink's carbonation is sealed in, it stays fizzier for longer.

Cans are the champion for delivering a perfect product every time and consumers know it. Eighty-five per cent of consumers surveyed realise cans block out the damaging effects of light and help preserve flavour and carbonation. And 65 per cent of consumers surveyed say the feeling of a frosty can is a big part of the refreshing drink experience. That's why the number of craft breweries putting their beer in cans has more than doubled since 2012. So says Russ Phillips, *CanTech* contributor, author of the recent book,

*Canned!* and manager of the website [craftcans.com](http://craftcans.com), about the artwork that graces craft beer cans. According to Phillips, there are now more than 500 US craft brewers using cans, while five years ago it was just a few dozen. Improved taste can in part be attributed to the improved liners now used in canning to prevent any metallic taste. At Ball, process innovations developed by our engineering and manufacturing teams have enriched customers' abilities to ensure fresh and consistent taste in their product lines, ultimately mitigating and eliminating manufacturing-induced taste factors. Product

innovations developed by Ball's marketing teams have further distinguished customers' brands by providing innovative, functional, and eye-catching containers for their products.

**DECISIONS, DECISIONS**

When SurveyMonkey asked 300 consumers of beer for their top considerations when peering into the beer case to pick a brew, they had four: taste, price, style of beer, and brewery. They also offered a variety of other insights:

- 95 per cent of people say they bring and enjoy beer at picnics and BBQs
- 76 per cent per cent bring and drink beer while relaxing at a pool, lake or by the ocean
- 62 per cent said they buy beer in cans for convenience when outdoors or camping
- 57 per cent respondents said taste was the most important factor when choosing a beer
- 55 per cent of people are choosing six-packs when they buy beer
- 47 per cent said they drink more beer in the summer than at any other time of the year
- 9 per cent are enjoying a beer outside almost every day (lucky people).

For soft drinks, it's all about the bubbles, and only aluminium cans deliver ultimate fizzy, fresh deliciousness. Cans protect and then release a rush of carbonated refreshment that defines the soda experience. What's more, the can's cold top and narrow opening focus the fizz – all in a uniquely portable vessel. Whether you call it soda, pop, or cola, everyone enjoys a carbonated drink.

**THE GREEN GOAL**

Sustainability was not a societal norm when beer was introduced in a can. Eight decades later, we know that providing beverages, food and aerosols in metal cans is only a smart packaging solution if it is also a sustainable solution.



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Here are a few reasons why:

- In the US, 105,800 cans are recycled per minute
- Recycled beverage cans can be back on store shelves in as little as 60 days
- Aluminium cans contain an average of 68 per cent total recycled content
- Nearly 75 per cent of all aluminium ever produced is still in use today and 80 per cent of all steel ever produced remains in use
- Cans are 100 per cent recyclable and can be recycled infinitely with no loss of quality.

Why are cans so sustainable? Because aluminium is the third most common element of the Earth's crust, at eight per cent. Steel is made from iron ore, limestone and coking coal, three very common natural resources. Iron is the fourth most plentiful element. These facts contribute to the sustainability of the can.

Nearly 67 per cent of all aluminium cans are recycled in the US compared to approximately 28 per cent of glass containers and 31 per cent of PET bottles. Steel beverage cans, still used in Europe and other markets around the world, can be separated easily from other waste via magnets and therefore have a 70 per cent global recycling rate. Here's the breakdown on market average value of beverage containers in the US recycling stream (per pound of material):

- Glass less than \$0.01
- Aluminium \$0.89
- Plastic \$0.16.

With these global rates, the can is the world's most recycled packaging product. Because metals are 100 per cent and infinitely recyclable, they can be reused in various applications to become new products again and again.

#### INVENTION AND REINVENTION

Taste and sustainability often go hand-in-hand with innovation. Though they are often invisible to the outside world, many successful product and process innovations provide significant environmental and economic benefits. From the heart of San Diego's burgeoning craft beer scene, popular Saint Archer Brewing Company has released its four core beers in 12oz cans for many of the taste and sustainability reasons discussed.

"The bottom line is cans speak to who we are as a brand and the lifestyle we all live," says Saint Archer CEO Josh Landan. "Saint Archer was founded by a collection of professional surfers and skateboarders who all love being active and on the move, and cans fit that lifestyle so well. Plus, cans are so good for the beer, that it really just made sense for us."

By combining fresh packaging appeal and functionality with a consumer's favourite refreshing beverage, a better drinking experience is achieved. Consumers know taste is paramount to enjoying a beverage in a can, and are eager to embrace the importance of sustainability and its significant environmental and economic benefits.

We all know packaging products come and go. They are invented and then reinvented as technology advances and consumer preferences change. But whatever form they take, we also know there's always a river that runs through it where someone is sinking the suds. 

