



Wine in cans have so much going for them, including the younger generation don't want to do what their parents did.

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When I first heard of wine in a can from Australian wine company Barokes – the first people to overcome the can-lining challenges in the late 1990s – I, like most people at the time, dismissed the idea, especially as most of their wine range was fizzy. It sounded more like alcoholic soda than proper wine. However, since then their wines have gone on to win more than 400 medals internationally.

While I could acknowledge and appreciate the convenience and practicality of the 250mL cans, I could not come to grips with the idea of wine in a can. Unfortunately, I did not get the opportunity to try their still wines at the time, which perhaps may have changed my opinion on the concept.

Nothing much happened in the following decade to change my mind on the concept of wine in a can – until November 2018. While attending the Hong Kong International Wine Fair I came across Taylor Monson from Goose Ridge Estate in Washington State. On their impressively-presented stand she had cans of wine alongside their premium bottled wine. Slightly reluctantly I agreed to taste the wines in the cans and compare them to their bottled wine.

The can range under the brand Cascadian consisted of a Chardonnay, a 'Red' and a Rosé. The Chardonnay in the can was exactly the same as the Chardonnay in their bottles. The two other wines in cans were both pretty

smart wines that one would be quite happy to drink and pour for guests.

This was an attitude-changing revelation to me and I started to look at wine in a can in a different light. I realised that, yes, you can get quality wine in a can from caring producers in exactly the same way you can great or poor wines in bottles, depending on the producer.

A recent study in the USA shows that the wine in a can market has experienced more than 50 percent sales growth in the past two years. This is not a fad as, according to the report, 'Gen Z, Millennials and Gen X' are all buying wine in a can at about the same rate as each other, followed by baby boomers, with highest awareness and trial rate among Millennials and Gen Z.

The report shows that producers who have been early adopters have seen the wine in cans as a new market extension for their brand, rather than merely a substitution of bottles for cans, as the cans have aided them in growing their total sales, in some cases quite significantly.

More recently at the annual Cellar Door Fest in Adelaide, I came across the local wine in a can outfit, Riot Wines. These are the guys who started 'wine in a keg' with a Rosé on tap two years ago. They have now branched out into cans as a viable alternative to glass (bottles), especially now that the shelf life of the cans is at least 18 months. They consider the battle for the acceptance of wine in a can to be very much like the battle for the acceptance of screwcaps nearly two decades ago. Initial pooh-poohing and tut-tutting leading to gradually more and more adoption of the idea, as happened with screwcaps. No, they are not saying all wine will end up in a can, no more than all beer does. There is a place for both bottle and can in today's

market. Likewise with cider – much is in bottles but there is a healthy proportion in cans as well.

Riot Wines' current offering in cans consists of the delicious, big-selling Rosé 2017, which is aromatic and crisp and is made from McLaren Vale Grenache and Sangiovese. This is followed by the Adelaide Hills Sparkling Chardonnay 2018 and then the Riot Blanc, a 2017 Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc, which is smashing. Lastly, but by no means leastly, the Riot Rouge, a 2018 McLaren Vale Grenache, that is sensational – it is so tasty, smooth, well balanced and rich that it is perfect for current consumption. All top quality, serious wines.

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Another producer who has jumped into the wine-in-a-can scene with verve is Fourth Wave Wine. They have released seven wines in a can from their light-hearted Mascareni Prosecco through to their serious Elephant in the Room Limestone Coast Chardonnay and their Take it to The Grave Langhorne Creek/Barossa Valley Shiraz. The label designs show that they are aiming directly at the younger market, with their Take it to The Grave label showing a sombrero-wearing skeleton sitting on a wine barrel strumming a guitar.

Even the big end of town has jumped on the can wagon, with Pernod Ricard selling a Jacob’s Creek Moscato in cans in Canada since 2017 and then last year launching them in Australia. I am told they are considering which other wines from their portfolio would be suitable to get the can treatment. That is, their lighter, brighter style wines.

Last year Treasury released six wines in a can across its A'tivo, Squealing Pig and T'Gallant labels. These were all either spritzig or sparkling. This was a deliberate strategy which will hopefully be backed up with quality still wines in cans in due course.

In Chile, powerhouse winery Santa Rita has just launched a canned Rosé into its extremely

conservative market. New Zealand’s Misty Cove Wines has launched a Sauvignon Blanc and a Pinot Noir in cans.

While usually slow to react to changes in the wine industry (such as screwcaps), Europe has already got one or two wines in cans. The first to launch was Winestar, whose founder Cedric Segal formed an association with well-reputed Languedoc-based Château de L’Ille to produce quality wine in a slim, elegant 187mL can.

England has now got The Uncommon brand of wine in a can, made 100 percent from British-grown grapes, including a sparkling wine made from the German generated grape

variety, Bacchus. There is also a brand called Pinot Pinot, which has launched a sparkling Pinot Grigio in a 200mL can. There are also one or two other brands offering fizzy lolly water-type wines in cans.

If the craft beer market is any guide, the potential for growth of the wine in a can segment of the market is massive. In 2016, 16 percent of all packaged craft beer in the UK was sold in cans. Today that figure is nudging 72 percent of all packaged craft beer, and still growing.

I am not so sure about the long-term future of the fizzy cans, which are, to me, basically, ‘wine coolers’. They may work well to get people into drinking wine from a can, but I am convinced that the real future of wine in a can will be with still wine, probably divided into two categories:

Commercial wines – The handy equivalent to a third of a bottle of quaffing wine, being so much more accessible and convenient.

Premium wines – Great quality serious wine that is designed to be consumed upon release and used as a substitute for a full bottle due to the circumstances or the situation. It is conceivable that one could find French AOC wines in a can eventually. Hopefully over

time most producers will can exactly the same wine as they bottle, so that the choice becomes one of convenience rather than wine quality as it became with casks.

To wrap up, what do cans have going for them?

- A single person-sized quantity of wine – no need to worry about leftovers, recorking (if you are European), etc.
- An easy introduction to wine for new wine drinkers.
- Safety – they can be consumed directly from can, avoiding drink spiking issues.
- Easily transportable.
- The wine lasts 18 months, which given that 85 percent of all wine is consumed within 48 hours of purchase means that longevity is not an issue.
- Able to be brought into venues where glass is not allowed.
- Ease and convenience compared to a bottle of wine, when out camping, hiking, boating, at the beach, festivals, sporting and other outdoor events.
- Producers are putting quality wine in their cans.
- They are lighter, unbreakable and faster to chill.

I think the market for wine in a can is going to blossom over the next few years due to all the factors mentioned as well as the younger generation’s desire to be different to their parents in what they drink. Hopefully wine in a can will work well to introduce the younger generations into wine, especially Millennials, just like ‘tinnies’ did for us back in my early days when beer came mainly in 750mL bottles. ♦

