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BOOZE

Save the planet, buy a can of beer

Aluminum tops bottles for eco-friendliness
Published July 23, 2009 by Mike Tessier in Booze

The beer can gets a bad rap; there is a false belief that the end product will taste like aluminum. This couldn't be further from the truth. With today's technology — a food-grade lining — the beer never touches the metal. This canned school of thought is changing with a revolution in the craft beer industry and with the help of a Calgary company, Cask Canning.

Throughout North America, a number of craft breweries are installing canning lines through Cask Canning for a lower initial investment than the more traditional bottling lines. Last year, one of the biggest craft brewing stars, and one of the world's most eco-friendly breweries — New Belgium of Boulder, Colo. — started canning its beers. Suddenly there's been an epiphany in the industry that the can is an ecologically and beer-friendly alternative to the traditional bottle.

There's been a bit of technology and science invented to get to this stage. The two greatest enemies to beer's freshness are light and air. Air oxidizes beer, which makes it taste like cardboard and exposure to light turns beer skunky. The hermetically sealed and opaque can beats the bottle with the light problem. As well, the process of canning limits the amount of air in the packaging, more so than the less than airtight, and more expensive, bottle and cap combo. For recyclers and the eco-minded, aluminum cans use a much smaller fraction of energy and are less expensive to recycle than bottles. Further, cans are lighter, more compact and use less fuel to transport. Cans also require less refrigeration time to get cold, cutting energy use.

For anyone who has ever stepped on a bottle cap or a piece of broken glass, the can is far more welcoming. The summer-friendly container is also more easy to pack when camping, boating, rafting or hiking. Pssssst, my favourite bonus is that cans fit nicely into your pocket when sneaking them into movie theatres.

When you choose the can you don't have to drink industrial swill. Flavourful, interesting, character Canadian beers are now using this eco-friendly alternative.

Great Canned Beer Finds

Regular cans 341 ml — Cannery Naramata Nut Brown Ale: a solid example of the American brown style. For old punk rockers, Cannery also makes an Anarchist Amber Ale (Oil!) and rumour has it its IPA will be in Alberta in August in a can as well. The brewery's motto holds true: "Small Brewer-Big Flavour."

King Cans 500 ml — Radaburger, Bitburger and Pilsner Urquell: Three world-class pilsners that I've been sneaking into theatres for years. The Urquell is better out of the can than the green bottle. The Radaburger and Bitburgers are great guzzling beers for the summer.

Steam Whistle and Kelowna Pilsner: solid examples of Canadian pilsner far from macro-crap.

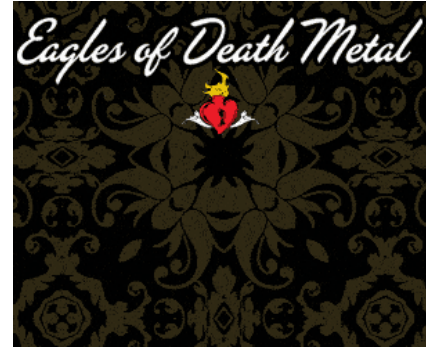
Fuller's London Pride: a classic English pale ale that is cheaper in the can and is in better shape than the more expensive bottle.

Tree's Thirsty Beaver: A decent amber ale, with a name that makes you proud to be Canadian.

Can recycling uses 95 per cent less energy than it takes to make a new can and aluminum can be infinitely recycled. Since 1886, when the modern process for making this tough metal was first invented, over 70 per cent of the virgin aluminum ever made is still in use, according to aluminum manufacturer Alcoa. So get off your can and save the planet.



Tomb



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