

The Cans of the Year Awards have become recognised as the annual platform to celebrate achievements by the metal packaging industry. This year's winners will be announced in Chicago at a gala dinner during The Canmaker Summit on 8 October.

The entries to the competition — now in its 11th year — show how metal packaging meets tough customer demands with added-value features such as differentiation and consumer convenience. The awards offer the best opportunity to see how dynamic and exciting metal packaging has become, and how its manufacturers are masters in their fields.

They also show how brand managers are recognizing that canmakers are able to deliver much wider solutions in order to reach new sectors and consumers.

# Cool metal

*Entries to The Cans of the Year Awards demonstrate our industry's commitment to offer packaging formats that provide value for customers, says Mónica Higuera*

When selecting packaging for fast moving goods, whether food, drinks, personal care or industrial products, marketers are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits and product differentiation opportunities that metal offers.

And cans are being offered in more exciting shapes with improved

convenience features and stunning decoration.

Only two years after its introduction, the Bottles category attracts an increasing number of entries reflecting a trend that was first recognized at the Cans of the Year in 1998.

Almost ten years ago, the Can of the



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Year prize was awarded to Cebal for its impact-extruded aluminium bottle for Völsk vodka; two years later Japan's Daiwa took the prize for its recloseable D&I bottle can; and last year Exal's stylish bottle for Coca-Cola Blak took the honours while the smooth-necked bottle for Heineken took the Delegates' Choice award.

This year marks the first commercial application of the C2C, or coil-to-can, bottle from Exal in the US. The C2C process uses techniques similar to those for making beverage cans from aluminium sheet but with necking systems derived from impact-extruded aerosol cans and bottles. It means that the weight of the 30cl Octane 7.0 bottle entered for the awards is less than two-thirds that of an equivalent impact-extruded bottle.

Participants in the Bottles category feature a range of technologies — impact-extruded, D&I and three-piece bottles in different shapes and sizes — and contain drinks such as premium beer, cider, wine, vodka and tequila.

One of the key trends in the beverage sector is how it is moving away from fizzy drinks. Added value and wellness beverages including iced teas and coffees, juices and energy drinks

are being packed in metal as the material of choice.

Even sparkling wine is being sold in metal. One of the most eye-catching entries this year is that by the iTiS brand, brainchild of Austrian packaging designer Ui Kerbl who plans to offer a range of specialised drinks that include functional waters that aid metabolism.

The brand is using an impact-extruded 30cl can featuring an embossed logo and is made by Tubex in Germany.

"The can itself becomes an unmistakable brand because of its high quality, which protects it from product piracy," said Kerbl. "The can is a pleasure to hold because of its silky lacquer."

Some 60,000 of the cans of white-wine cocktail have been produced for sale at between six and seven euros each, said Kerbl who explained the thinking behind the brand. "It will be like champagne," he said. "Whatever 'it is' we do, it will be totally unique, there will be nothing to compare it with."

Metal also conveys a message of quality that no carton or plastics container is capable of matching, with the most eye-catching special promotions and commemorative editions being launched in tinfoil or aluminium.

Metal was the material of choice when Perrier-Jouët looked for the premium quality and sophistication required

for its champagne. Crown Speciality packaging responded with a perforated and embossed decorative tin.

Crown also met the brief of product differentiation with the Ballantine's hip flask for Chivas Brothers. Crown used a pearlescent ink to create depth plus the development of a new soft touch varnish to complement the unusual pillow-effect embossing.

Convenience is another overriding trend, and here closures play a key role. The increasing use of screw caps on bottles meets the need for resealable packaging for beverages, while peelable aluminium membrane ends are increasingly being used in the food sector.

Coca-Cola is participating in the competition with a bottle for its coffee drink Blak that features a ring-pull crown, which uses a scored aluminium cap with a plastics seal and an attached plastics ring.

Called Maxicrown, the ring-pull has been adopted by a number of drinks companies for glass bottles and were most recently applied to small aluminium bottles for nutraceutical products in Japan where they are made under licence by Japan Crown Cork (JCC), a subsidiary of Toyo Seikan Kaisha.

Impress is another canmaker keen on added-value features for its packaging. In the Prototype category it entered a drawn shaped food container for use on microwave ovens featuring a peel-off lid.

*Star line-up: a selection of the candidates for Can of the Year shows the diversity of ways in which metal packaging is being applied across a range of sectors*





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Against the perforated backdrop from Crown's Perrier-Jouët decorative tin are a number of drinks and syrup containers, all of which are moving metal into premium categories

In Korea, Impress has also launched a 4-ounce two-piece food can for club luncheon meat with peelable membrane end following the success of the 7oz and 12oz versions launched last year for Daesang Corporation.

Convenience was also the thinking behind many of Impress's entries in the general line category. Among them was that for the new Total Woodcare range by ICI-Hammerite Products, which combines the practicality of a rectangular can with a level lid opening and a handle.

Also in General line, Ball Aerosol and Specialty Packaging in the US entered a can for Meguiar's Gold Class car wax.

The 500x114 package is designed to keep a sponge clean and dry during distribution, and ready after reuse by

means of a plastic insert within the dome lid that is designed for improved opening performance in contrast to 'pry-open' versions.

Size is an additional critical factor in the search for ultimate convenience, and in the beverage sector there is a growing trend that is taking drinkers away from the traditional 12-oz size.

Canmakers are now offering beverage packaging in anything between 10cl impact extruded bottles and 8-oz slim cans, to one-litre D&I drinks cans and ten-litre beer kegs.

In Russia, leading brand Baltika has been sold in one-litre cans made by Rexam since April. In the US, Rexam is also the manufacturer of the Monster can, a 24-oz size being used by Budweiser to

promote a number of baseball teams.

Shelf appeal was also achieved by Rexam with its 360-deg debossing technology for Spentrius beer.

While it is becoming increasingly difficult to choose the winners of the Cans of the Year Awards, one thing is for sure: all of them will be prime examples of eye-catching, convenient containers that protect their contents like no other packaging.

Prospects for metal packaging are good. As long as the industry is able to communicate the added-value features of metal to brand managers and packaging technologists while exploiting its environmental credentials and trendy image potential, cans are perfectly positioned for a bright future.

