

AstraPouch takes flight

When we first wrote about the AstraPouch package in our May 2010 issue, we deemed it “Too New to Be Trendy.” The concept of a compact, virtually indestructible envelope had earned acceptance in Europe, Australia and South Africa but was still unknown in North America.

Dave Moynihan, a former executive at Constellation Wines, thought North America was ripe for the bag-without-a-box and founded AstraPouch North America in Penfield, N.Y. His first client was Glenora Winery in Dundee, N.Y., and upstate New York remains a leading market, but the appetite is growing, notably in the outdoorsy Pacific Northwest.

The AstraPouch is fabricated from two layers of recyclable plastic with a one-way spigot to keep oxygen out. The standard 1.5-liter pouch measures 7 inches wide and 10 inches tall; the flat, stand-up bottom is about 2 inches wide. It chills quickly and contracts to eliminate excess oxygen. It’s the only wine package that can be hung like potato chips from a display rack, making it ideal for checkout line impulse purchases.

Moynihan is now expanding his line to include a 3-liter “party pouch,”



Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards’ success packaging its Red Cat brand in AstraPouches prompted the winery to reorder twice during the first 12 weeks the formatting option was offered.

the AstraPouch-ImpaQ. This summer, 200,000-case Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards of Hector, N.Y., ordered the 3-liter size for its Red Cat brand, then reordered twice within 12 weeks. Moynihan reported that according to distributor Southern Wine & Spirits, it’s the hottest new package in upstate New York.

Most current AstraPouch packages take full advantage of the full-screen billboard provided with colorful graphics printed on the under layer of the pouch and protected by the bonded outer plastic. These are produced at the

AstraPouch plant and intended for the mass market: In just two years, Moynihan estimated, about 3 million units have been sold.

Moynihan is reaching out to smaller producers with customizable 1.5- and 3-liter “white pouches.” Wineries can order these stock items and affix their own labels to the exterior. These labels may not be quite as durable as the “cooler loving” preprinted version, but they can be delivered in just a day; printed packages take about nine weeks, post-label approvals, depending on the



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season, Moynihan said. AstraPouch also makes a specialized filler, which retails for about \$13,000.

4Parts planning

Every packaging story contains some sort of disclaimer advising winemakers that scheduling is vital: From label design and approvals to supply ordering and delivery, one slip can cause a smooth-running operation to founder in expensive last-minute substitutions and mistakes.

The biggest producers may hire logistics

people to track the supply chain, but the vast majority of wineries cannot afford that luxury. Enter PakTrak, a brand new (official debut: January 2013) service from 4Parts Design, a Sausalito, Calif., firm headed by David Hanson-Jerrard, a former executive with Gallo, Trinchero and Lafitte Cork & Capsule.

PakTrak is a software-based program to track key packaging materials. It's designed to help wineries "avoid excess inventory, supplemental bottling costs, associated materials.... See the status of all

moving parts from label design to glass and everything in between."

The concept is based, Hanson-Jerrard said, "on many conversations with wine executives all over the country about their struggles with suppliers—boxes of capsules, labels ordered in excess—because for the person in charge, it's not their primary responsibility. They're winemakers; ordering and logistics is not the way they work."

4Parts spent 18 months developing PacTrak, testing with one major client with multiple brands and bottlings. "We developed a system, trying to work through all the problems and enhancements. Some software packages have tried to include this as an adjunct. PacTrak is unique, developed by industry people. We had to go through a whole bottling cycle to test it," Hanson-Jerrard said.

For smaller wineries reliant on mobile or commercial bottlers, that cycle can be a "major bugaboo," Hanson-Jerrard pointed out. "If they forget to order the right materials, the financial consequences are huge. The capsules don't fit, so they have to use stock capsules: This affects their brand integrity."

PakTrak is offered with two service options. 4Parts can maintain the winery-packaging database, acting as the "center of the wheel" by contacting and coordinating with all vendors and keeping the winery advised. This can be an especially efficient option, since 4Parts may be in touch with the same vendors for multiple clients.

For option two, wineries might prefer to cultivate personal relationships with suppliers. PacTrak will provide reports to both winery and suppliers.

"One of our unusual components, clients have told us: Our pricing works. They pay a set amount by brand; it wouldn't be fair for us to bid it like a subscription," Hanson-Jerrard said.

"We are the opposite of tech people. The best word to describe our work: milestones." Whether your packaging logistics could use a kick in the pants, or you just need a gentle tap on the shoulder, this new service can provide reminders to keep you on track.

Time to go shopping

Perhaps these previews have sparked your interest, or maybe you're in the market for something specific. We recommend you visit the packaging suppliers listed on page 55 for more inspiration.

The time is right: Mind your milestones. **W&V**



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