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Toronto Communities

UPCOMING EVENTS

OUR CITY ENVIRONMENT

French Rabbit Wines: Working with the LCBO's Enviro-Friendly Packaging Initiative

By Leanne Minichillo

Have you ever asked yourself, "How can I consume alcohol and save the environment at the same time?"

Me neither, but apparently someone did, and that query gave birth to French Rabbit wines.

On shelves at select LCBO's since July 28, French Rabbit Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Chardonnay have been flying off the shelves.

It's quite intriguing when you walk into a liquor store and notice a shiny orange Tetra Pak juice box on the shelves, masquerading as wine. Alas, this is no disguise. French Rabbit's maker, Boisset, is the first vintner in the world to work with the LCBO's new enviro-friendly packaging initiative.

"With the support of our suppliers, our goal is to promote innovative ways to reduce packaging, which will allow the LCBO to offer premium products at attractive prices while benefiting the environment," says Bob Peter, President and COO of the LCBO.

A popular method of packaging in Australia, Italy, and Spain, over 1.6 billion litres of wine were packaged in Tetra cartons last year.

It takes only one truck to deliver the same number of Tetra Pak cartons that it would for 26 trucks to deliver glass bottles to the recycling plant.

Tetra Pak containers use 90 percent less packaging than glass wine bottles, which means big advantages to preserving the environment. Taking up less space during transportation, it only takes two semi-trailers to transfer one million unfilled cartons, as opposed to approximately 52 trailers to carry one million wine bottles, which, in turn, saves fuel, therefore reducing the emissions into the air.

It takes only one truck to deliver the same number of Tetra Pak cartons that it would for 26 trucks to deliver glass bottles to the recycling plant. When the Tetra cartons arrive, they are recycled into household tissue products, including paper towels and bathroom tissue.

The LCBO anticipates that, with the sales of French Rabbit alone, packaging will be reduced by 400,000 kilograms a year, eventually attaining their goal of 10 million kilograms as other products become available in environmentally-conscious packaging.

Committed to the cause, the LCBO, already having contributed \$30 million toward municipal Blue Box initiatives, has established the Natural Heritage Fund, to which Boisset will make a minimum contribution of \$160,000, taking 50 cents from each French Rabbit sale. The Fund assists in creating and rehabilitating wildlife habitats throughout Ontario.

So it's fine and good that the environment is being saved, but that's not necessarily the foremost thought on your mind when the juicy, barbequed strip loin is calling your name.

A Chardonnay for fish, Merlot and Cab for red meats, these wines are distinctly French; yet, the Tetra packaging taste is completely undetectable as being different from a glass bottle.

Exposure to light can damage wine, hence the green or brown bottle tint. Impervious to ultra-violet rays, French Rabbit is 100 percent protected, keeping the wine tasting great. A screw cap and collapsible packaging allow you to reseal the wine without a pump, eliminating the possibility of nasty cork-taint.

Since it hit the shelves in Ontario, and we're the first ones in the world to try it, more than half a year's sales target was achieved during the first two weeks. At \$12.95 a Pak, French Rabbit offers an entire litre of wine for the same price as a 750mL glass bottle.

Convenient for camping trips, picnics, or long hauls where the fear of breaking glass looms, you can take pride in your purchase, not only because you won't have Merlot-stained skivvies, but because you are helping to preserve the environment, and that is, certainly, something to raise a glass to.

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