



Beaujolais Nouveau goes 'green' — in plastic

Wine will be transported by sea instead of air and bottles will be recyclable

Updated 7:20 a.m. PT, Tues., Nov. 11, 2008

A fleet of cargo ships is set to invade U.S. ports from Boston to Miami next month, laden with millions of bottles of Beaujolais Nouveau.

At about the same time, cargo planes carrying 30,000 cases of the first wine of the 2008 harvest in plastic bottles will also be heading toward North America.

The two biggest producers of Beaujolais Nouveau are going green by transporting their wine by sea rather than air or packaging the vintage in environmentally friendly bottles.

Boisset, the second-largest maker of Beaujolais Nouveau, is bottling its entire harvest in PET bottles that are "absolutely recyclable," said Patrick Egan, a spokesman for Boisset America.

The green shipment is due to arrive in time for the wine's traditional third Thursday in November release.

Meanwhile, Georges Duboeuf, the largest maker of Beaujolais Nouveau, struck a deal with the French government to allow an early release of his wine so that he could use ships to haul about 75 percent of his 2 million U.S.-bound bottles, instead of the one-third that usually arrives by boat.

"It significantly changes the (carbon) footprint and it keeps the cost level down to the consumer, as well as keeping it in that \$10-\$12 range," explained Barbara Scalera, a spokeswoman for Duboeuf's U.S. agent W. J. Deutsch & Sons.

Air, sea and motorcycle

But not all of its Beaujolais Nouveau is coming in glass bottles. Bowing to the wishes of Whole Foods, the large U.S. organic foods supermarket chain, they have joined Boisset in offering the breezy, young wine made from Gamay grapes in plastic bottles as well. Whole Foods will be offering both Duboeuf and Boisset.



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The PET (polyethylene terephthalate) bottles, much like those used for soft drinks, weigh nearly 50 percent less than glass, Egan said, so shipping costs are lower.

A case of glass bottles weighs about 38 pounds (17 kgs), but the same case in plastic bottles weighs about 22 pounds (10 kg), according to Jean-Charles Boisset, president of Boisset Family Estates.

The move is expected to lower the freight costs by a third and the result is that the suggested price for Boisset's Mommessin Beaujolais Nouveau and Bouchard Aine & Fils Beaujolais Nouveau will be \$12.99, instead of up to \$14.99 for U.S. consumers.

When asked if shipping by air negated the carbon footprint benefits, Egan replied, "Because we produce less, more of it needs to be here more quickly."

Although some wine lovers may not like the idea of plastic bottles, Egan said it does not harm the wine.

"It's not great for long-term aging. But for up to three years it protects the wine just as well as glass," he explained.

When DuBoeuf's shipments arrive in Miami and New York it plans to transport the wine from the docks to restaurant dining room tables by motorcycles. It seems there is a sizeable number of chefs at top-end restaurants who are also motorcycle aficionados.

"We're going to have a Beaujolais biker squad," Scalara said. "They'll be roaring through the streets of Manhattan and along the strip in Miami."

So on November 20, chefs David Bouley of the restaurant Bouley, Jean-Claude Baker of Chez Josephine and Marc Murphy of Landmark will be cruising Manhattan's streets laden with wine, while Carlos Fernandez of Hi-Life Cafe, Juan Pablo Viejo of Andu and Tony Dee of Ocean Prime will rumble through Miami's South Beach neighborhood to get the first wine of the season to their tables.

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