

Edible Oil:

The Case for Metal Packaging



Introduction

In the search for the right packaging for a given product, typically there is a set of pre-established or “go-to” options within the supply chain. But how often do decision-makers think outside the pre-established box of solutions? What if the best packaging option isn’t widely known or available? In the case of edible oil, new manufacturing techniques have made way for metal packaging to become the best option because of its ability to protect the technical properties of the oil while also driving commercial value and delivering a sustainable experience to consumers. This article will take a detailed look at the case for packaging oils in metal and explain the technical advantages of metal over other substrates currently available.

Current State of Packaging Options

According to data from Euromonitor International, retail sales of liquid pour edible oil containers under 750ml consist nearly entirely of plastic and glass, 79% and 21% respectively in the North American market. In larger volume containers, those over 750ml, there is some presence of 3-piece, rectangular steel containers for premium or harder-to-hold varieties such as delicate olive oil. Even among these large containers, we find less than 5% of products packaged in metal, while the majority of large volume oils, especially those at lower price points, are packaged in plastic. While metal is an established packaging material option for these large volume, premium oil varieties, penetration of the smaller volume market remains practically non-existent. As the leader in metal packaging innovation, we saw this as an opportunity to create the right solution for both brands and consumers that will meet the current market needs for lightweight, durable, attractive packaging that protects the product integrity better than any of the current options available to the market.

Metal Options

In recent years, metal packaging manufacturers have expanded the capabilities to form metal into a wide variety of shapes and formats. While large square gallon tins have been part of the bulk market for decades, and oil aerosol cans are recently an established necessity in many home kitchens, these formats only scratch the surface of what can be done with metal. These new formats open the opportunity for new use cases, new delivery systems, increased sustainability, and improved consumer experience. Metal packaging today falls into three major categories: Aluminum liquid pour spouts, sprays and pump systems, and large volume steel containers.



Liquid Pour Spouts

Sprays and Pumps

Large Volume Container

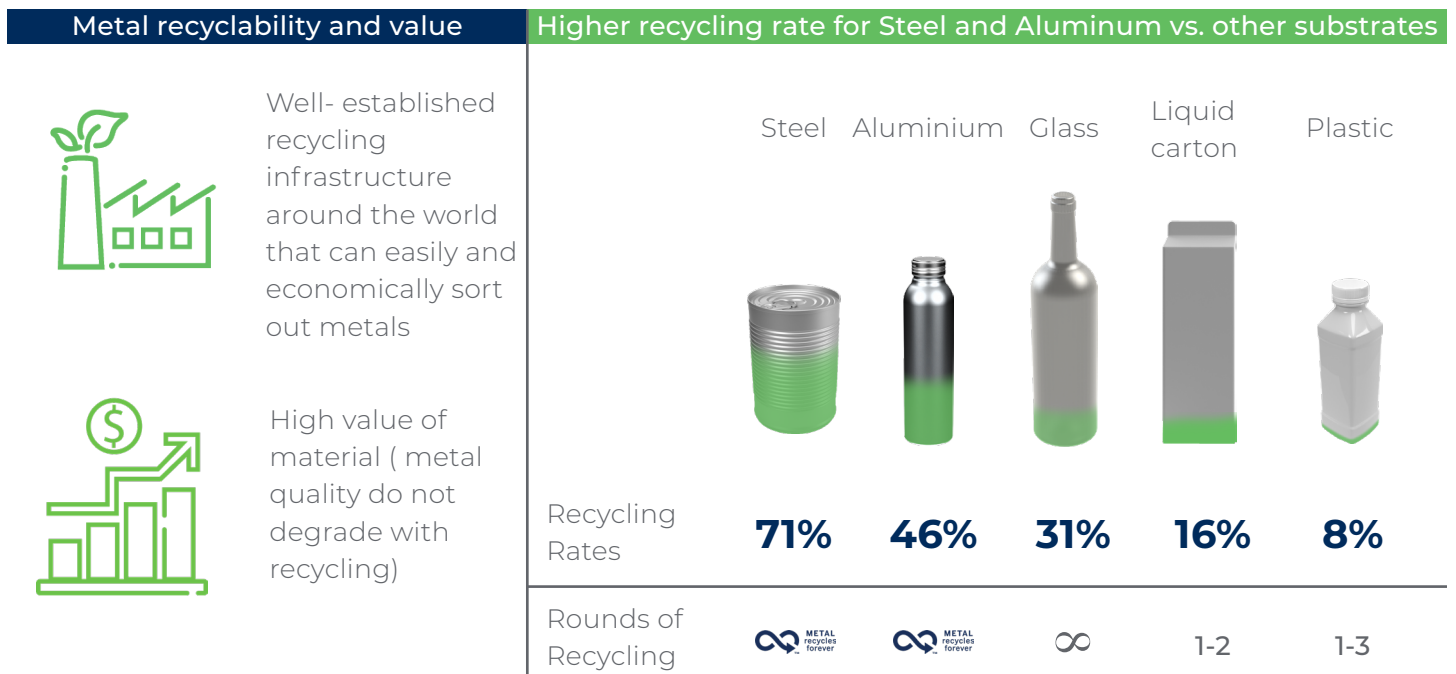
When it comes to evolving packaging to meet current needs, we look at the benefits of current shapes, sizes, and dispensing options that best fit the existing preferences and infrastructure to minimize disruption and combine market expertise with new manufacturing techniques. In the case of edible oils, this primarily meant a bottle with controlled pour. The aim should always be to add benefits from metal without subtracting benefits experienced with other materials. With extensive innovation in extruded aluminum bottle capabilities in the beverage, personal care, and home care markets, the fundamental technological hurdles to producing a lightweight, aluminum bottle for retail environments have already been solved – this meant applying those technologies and lessons to the edible oil space. The aluminum bottle achieves both the lightweight and durability of plastic without concerns for leaching and the premiumization offered by glass.

	Durable	Lightweight	Product Protection	Aesthetic Appeal
Aluminium	●	●	●	●
Plastic	●	●	●	●
Glass	●	●	●	●

While combining the best of other material attributes, metal also improves upon shelf life, and of course – sustainability.

Sustainability

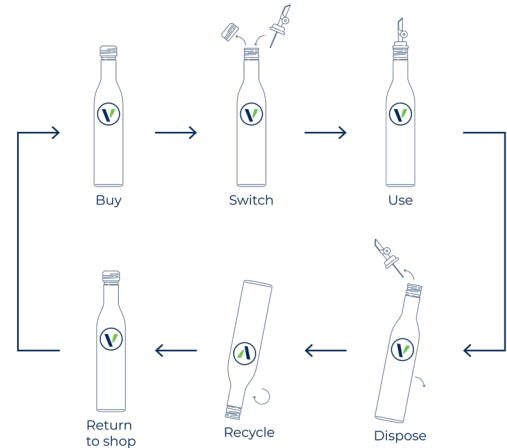
Metal really shines when confronted with the topic of sustainability. As an infinitely recyclable material with the highest recycling rate across regions, metal is proven to be the most environmentally sustainable substrate for a truly circular economy. Fun Fact – 75% of aluminum produced is still in use today.¹



2. Based on average Q1 2021 value per ton (U.S.) calrecycle & resource-recycling

Additionally, metal improves the sustainability proposition with high speed in-line printing that enables metal packaging to take on nearly infinite graphical effects without the need for labels. Brands can use the entire surface of the bottle to achieve the desired look without ever adding paper or plastic components. This serves to both differentiate the look of the bottle while removing unnecessary materials and simplifying recycling for the consumer.

The sustainability proposition does not stop with the sustainability of metal materials alone; adopting a refill and replace system has the potential to eliminate all single use plastic parts entirely. In a refill and replace system, consumers purchase a mono-material bottle of oil with a reusable spout attachment to reuse with the next purchase. In this way, consumers get the benefit of a premium pour spout and can replace the bottled oil with no wasted material. The empty aluminum bottles get recycled and returned to the raw material stream which in turn provides continuous recycled content to the supply chain.



Commercial Value

Along with these technical improvements just discussed, metal bottles also offer extensive commercial benefits to converting brands. From differentiating in stores to increased use at home, metal packaging solutions have the ability to drive value at the business level.

Differentiation Perhaps the most apparent advantage of new, metal packaging for edible oils is just that- it's new. The edible oil aisle looks the same in most grocery stores and is easily divided into plastic containers or glass bottles. In this sea of sameness, metal formats stand out immediately, and with the right sleek graphics, brands can attract first time buyers looking for something new.

Brand loyalty Not only does differentiated metal packaging drive first time consumers, it can also be integral in building a base of consumer loyalty. Attractive, unique packaging that stands out in store aisles also stands out on the counter. Paired with a sustainable refill model, attractive bottles actively encourage product usage in the home and repeat purchases.

Product strategy As we have witnessed in other consumer goods segments, brands can use metal packaging in their product strategy differentiate new products, revive existing brands brand, preimmunize a line, and demonstrate their commitment to sustainability.

Conclusion

The desire to find sustainable alternatives to single-use packaging grows, and the pressure for brands to act is increasing. As the world is looking for sustainable materials and solutions, the supply chain is adjusting, and brands have a window of opportunity to stand out as sustainability-minded. To date, metal packaging for edible oils has been available in traditional large tins for bulk liquid and aerosol formats for cooking sprays, but with the introduction of aluminum bottles for smaller quantities of liquid edible oil, there is now an opportunity for even more products to benefit from metal packaging.



References:

1. www.aluminum.org/Recycling
2. Association of European Producers of Steel for Packaging; Ellen MacArthur Foundation/World Economic Forum/McKinsey & Company; European Aluminium/Metal Packaging Europe; Eurostat; Global Recycling; International Aluminium Institute; Recovery; UNEPA, SPC, CalRecycle, Carton Council



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