

What's Cool

Products that are smart, make your tasks easier and provide cost or labor savings

Bill Pregler

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New Packaging from AstraPouch

Expanded line of pouches and fillers now affordable for wineries of any size

I RECENTLY TALKED WITH Dave Moynihan, president of AstraPouch, who two years ago introduced the U.S. wine world to his new concept package from South Africa. Back then I wrote about the durable 1.5-liter soft pouch and its many attributes, like having high portability with low material cost, acting as a billboard for creative graphics, eliminating oxidation and even offering accessibility to no-glass venues. All this makes for new marketing ideas “outside the box.” Which is the whole point. AstraPouch is an eye-catching, bag-in-the-box without the box.

The company is booming and no longer imports pouches. With a new licensing agreement, they now have a domestic and continuous supply chain, from production facilities to 10-color flexo printing, warehousing and distribution.

What is even better is that by initially servicing large wineries, the company's success now allows it to focus on smaller wineries across the country. The cost of entry is so low that wineries of any size can begin experimenting with this new packaging—like small, custom production runs sold right out of the tasting room. I really like affordable products that offer fresh marketing opportunities to everyone, especially when it involves packaging.

The original pouch was 1.5 liters, but now a 3.0-liter pouch is also available. Both pouches are still the only soft containers rigid enough to stand by themselves on a shelf, thereby offering a unique presentation, leaving labeling intact and completely visible.



The AstropaQ pouch sits beside the manual bench top filler.

The other new pouch in their line is called the 1.5-liter **AstropaQ™**. What's cool is it's a clean, white pouch with no graphics applied. (The bulk of their business will still be pouches with winery-supplied graphics printed on the package.) These come at a minimum of 25,000 units per SKU. With the plain white AstropaQ, however, you can purchase a single box containing only 320 units. The box weighs 31 pounds, and **FedEx** delivers it to your winery. Compare that cost to 320 1.5-liter glass bottles.

With the AstropaQ, you simply apply your own pressure-sensitive labels directly onto the white pouch of whatever varietal you want to sell that day. And remember, with the valve, there is no cork or foil. For a minimum investment, seasonal marketing promotions are suddenly at hand: 1.5-liter packs are immediately available for the beach, the boat or the picnic, and they all move right out the tasting room door at “full retail.” You also eliminate the soggy box in the cooler or looking for a corkscrew.

To make this happen, AstraPouch offers an entry-level, bench-top filler called the Astrofill-100. Filling is simple. Again, you start by applying your existing pressure-sensitive labels to the flat surfaces. Then remove the valve, sparge (inflate the pouch) with nitrogen, gravity-feed the wine, reseal and you are done. I was told the best method is to purchase an inexpensive digital scale, tare and fill to a predetermined weight.

The pouches come with finger holes for carrying but why not add a display rack in the tasting room featuring your wines? Better yet, have some chilling





The semi-automatic Astrofill 4000 fills up to 10 pouches per minute.

in the back. I was told you can get wine to temperature in 15 minutes. As mentioned, the pouches also will stand on their own in neat rows, plainly in view behind the cash register.

Any smart vendor offers equipment upgrades, and AstraPouch has other fillers available to increase production. If pouches really start to sell, you buy into the semi-automatic Astrofill™ 3000 (3/4-pouch/minute) or the faster Astrofill™ 4000 (8/10 p/m). Full automation will be the Model #8000, soon to be released. The company also offers a co-pack network on both coasts. Deliver your wine and pouches and packaging is done for you.

The semi-automatic fillers are made in America for ease of service and spare parts. They are all 110/120-volt, single-phase and pull a minimum of 2 amps. The process is the same as the manual equipment: insert the empty pouch, sparge, fill and seal. You supply nitrogen and air. Clean-up is CIP with either hot water or steam. What's really cool is a winery now can offer 1.5-liter or 3.0-liter packaging without having to modify its existing 750-ml bottling line. Avoiding the cost of change parts (alone) will pay for this equipment.

What's Cool: AstraPouch is not intended to replace glass bottles—though on my fishing boat, that works. It is all about convenience, efficiency and really cool marketing possibilities that will add nicely to your tasting room sales.

For those interested, the most recent data from **The Nielsen Company** on wine category segments show that the dollar volume share of 1.5-liter wine is consistently 20 percent of the total of all table wines. Think about that at your next marketing meeting.

I like that the pouch is only 2 percent total weight of the finished package. I was also told a single truckload of flat, empty AstraPouches translates into 14 truckloads of empty glass bottles. You can greenwash that any way you want, but it sounds good to me.

For more information, contact AstraPouch president Dave Moynihan at www.astrapouch-na.com or 585-259-9202. **WBM**

Send your suggestions for cool products to Bill Pregler at bpregler@winebusiness.com

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