

French winery puts the good stuff in a can

By S. Irene Virbila, Los Angeles Times

Making its debut at the prestigious Vinexpo beginning Sunday in Bordeaux: French wine in a can!

Will Winestar's single-serving cans create a riot in the hallowed halls of the international wine and spirits fair? Maybe not.

The Paris-based company isn't dealing in the generic swill those adorable single-serving bottles typically hold. Their wines are all A.O.C. (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée). Each 187-milliliter can (one-fourth the size of a typical 750-milliliter bottle) lists the wine estate, the appellation and the grape varietals as well as the vintage. Working with the European office of Ball Packaging, Winestar founder Cédric Segal developed a can with a coating inside "to make total isolation between the wine and the can."



Wine now comes in a can.
Photo/Winstar

The first series hails from Château de L'Île from the Corbières appellation in the Languedoc region of southern France. The white is a blend of the local Rolle (Vermentino)

grape, vintage 2011. The rosé is Syrah and Grenache, vintage 2012. And the red is a blend of Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache from the 2011 vintage. The cans sell for about \$3.30 to \$4.

Segal says he got the idea when he was traveling in Asia and saw that Australia was selling quality wine there in cans. Why couldn't that work just as well with French wines?

He realizes that the French have a very strong tradition with the bottle and doesn't expect the can to be adopted immediately in France. "Most export markets, though, have already accepted the screw cap and synthetic cork, so it's not such a big leap," Segal said.

Winestar cans are essentially aimed for the at-home market when you want a little wine with dinner but don't want to open a whole bottle. "You can use it for picnics, or on the train or on your boat."

He cautions that it's not cheap wine and should ideally be drunk from a wine glass. So don't expect to see hipsters sitting at the edge of Canal Saint-Martin in Paris knocking back rosé straight from the can.

Right now, the firm's tinned wines are sold in wine shops and in supermarket snack sections. Segal is in talks with airlines, small supermarkets at train stations and also the French train company about carrying the wines.

Since Winestar only launched last week, it's early yet. By the end of the year, the company will release wines in cans from Bordeaux, Burgundy and the Rhone Valley. Segal also plans to introduce a premium line of wines in cans called Crus Etoiles at a higher price point. The first one will be a Sauternes. Sauternes? Now that's radical.

"The idea is to give the consumer the wines that they really want to drink at any time whether it's red, white or rosé, whether full-bodied or light," Segal said. "What Nespresso did

for the coffee market with single servings of high-quality coffee, we want to achieve for the wine market.”

Think we'll be seeing folks pick up a six-pack of Bordeaux for the Hollywood Bowl any time soon? Depends on how it goes at Vinexpo next week.