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Beer Packaging Trends

A look at the trends influencing beer packaging design and innovation.



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Introduction

Beer volume sales decreased by 3% in the U.S. and Canada last year, and declines are expected to continue through 2027. The industry faces stiff competition from other alcoholic beverages, with spirits poised to overtake beer as the market leader in share of servings in the U.S. No/low alcoholic beer is the best-performing category.

While small (1% share), these products are gaining popularity and becoming more mainstream. Other trends include premiumization, limited editions, flavor exploration, and larger pack sizes.

Read more to see how brands can leverage these insights to stand out in the crowded beer market.

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Premiumization

While most beer segments are expected to continue struggling, premium products show prospects for growth. According to IWSR, “while standard-and-below beer volumes are predicted to decline at a CAGR of -5% between 2022 and 2027, premium-and-above price brands are expected to increase at a CAGR of +3%.” Even no/low alcoholic beer is seeing stronger growth at higher price points. Alcohol remains a small luxury, and shoppers are willing to pay for premium products, often preferring quality over quantity. NielsenIQ notes that moderation also plays a role in the premiumization trend, with consumers wanting fewer but better alcoholic beverages.

Packaging is an effective way to create a premium impression. Unique shapes, special details, impactful branding, and custom designs can elevate a brand and differentiate it from the competition. Studio One Eleven® creates world-class packaging solutions for breweries of all sizes. The Studio developed a custom bottle for Veza Sur, a Miami-born craft brewery scion of AB-InBev. Our designers were inspired by the brand’s Latin roots, creating a short, stout, amber glass bottle that reflects Miami’s melting pot of Cuban, Caribbean, and South American influences. The package’s artisanal aesthetic suggests small-batch and premium quality.

“The ongoing shake-up in the top beer brands in the US has shifted a growing share of volume and value from the mid-priced band to the premium band.” (GlobalData)





Limited Edition

An offshoot of the premiumization trend is growing interest in Limited Edition offerings. Adam Rogers, Research Director of IWSR, notes, “An increasing number of consumers will drive hours for limited-production products, and/or wait in long lines for the ability to purchase highly sought-after products.” This is especially true of younger consumers who seek unique experiences.

Brand building is especially important in the saturated beer category, and limited-edition products and packaging can help brewers stand out and build awareness. This year, Coors introduced limited-edition packaging to support its Start Your Legacy campaign, which pays homage to the brand’s history. Budweiser introduced limited-edition can designs for each Major League Baseball team. Impactful design can attract consumers to unique new offerings and create something memorable and collectible.



“Craft beer and limited edition offerings have gained popularity among consumers who seek quality and authenticity.” (GlobalData)

Flavorful

As noted with the limited-edition trend, today's consumers crave experience and want to try new things. This includes unique and exciting flavors, with more than one-quarter of global consumers saying they typically choose "trendy" or unusual flavors in the alcoholic drinks they buy (GlobalData). RTD spirits and hard seltzers have taken a bite out of beer sales in part because they appeal to consumers with flavor. Fruit-forward beers that resemble category-crossing RTDs are entering the market, including offerings from New Belgium, SweetWater, and Lagunitas. The sour beer segment also continues to grow, adding appeal for people who don't typically drink beer.

Packaging graphics can communicate a product's flavor creativity and pique consumer interest. Playful and colorful brand design suggests a fun and flavorful product inside. Fruit imagery and prominent product names clearly communicate the flavor profile and differentiate from standard beer products.

"Suppliers are adapting with a dynamic approach to flavor exploration with shorter product lifecycles, and the introduction of entirely new styles." (NielsenIQ)





Larger Formats

IWSR has found that brewers are innovating with larger packaging formats, in part to compete with RTDs. Marten Lodewijks, IWSR Director of Consulting – Americas, says, “With competition in the convenience channel intensifying as spirit-based RTDs gain distribution, brewers have used beer packaging to entice customers. Larger 56.8cl (19.2 oz) cans are increasingly being used in convenience and grocery channels to capture the grab-and-go purchase occasion.” According to NielsenIQ data, at one point in 2023 craft 19.2oz. retail sales were up 57% vs 2022.

In addition to adding convenience, larger pack sizes create a strong impression at shelf and provide more billboard space for branding. Berlin Packaging’s expansive network of global suppliers allows us to find the perfect package for any beer and format, including growlers, mini kegs, and large cans and glass bottles. We created a mini keg for Shiner, helping them stand out on the shelf and expand into different markets.

“A reliable grab-and-go option for nearly any occasion, the 19.2oz stovepipe is surely here to stay for quite some time.” (Bearded & Brewed)



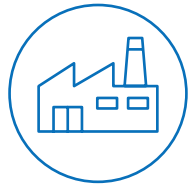


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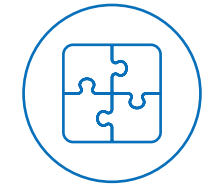
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