

# Paperboard bottles here to stay

By Ingerése Keuzenkamp



Founder Andrew Ingham of Interpunkt.

Since launching South Africa's first range of wines in sustainable paperboard bottles in May last year, Interpunkt has been inundated with requests from wineries who want to follow suit.

When Interpunkt founder Andrew Ingham came up with the idea of selling wine in paperboard bottles he looked for a dynamic, like-minded partner for his initiative. His aim was to create high-quality, sustainable, easy-drinking wines for casual wine drinkers, whether knowledgeable about wine or not.

He homed in on Journey's End, not just for its great wines and respected winemakers, Leon Esterhuizen and Mike Dawson, but also for its own sustainable and ethical accreditations. With 20 years' experience in both off- and on-trade wine buying across Australia, America, Germany and Asia, Andrew firmly believes that consumers deserve palatable, sustainable wines that are easy to find and purchase. "All too often wine brands are talking and selling to one group only – the wine engaged," he says. "Yet the biggest group of wine drinkers, about 68%, are new to wine, occasional wine drinkers or unengaged."

The opportunity to partner with Andrew and his Interpunkt brand to launch wine in cardboard bottles was one they couldn't miss, Journey's End managing director Rollo Gabb says. "It's been an important partnership for us and demonstrates the need for the wine world to think out of the box and strive to push boundaries to become ever more sustainable."

## The findings

Paperboard is used for the packaging, which shows customers that great wine can be enjoyed while having a minimal impact on the environment. The paperboard bottles have a lower carbon impact than traditional glass alternatives and are five times lighter thanks to their 100% recyclable outer shells.

Two wines, a Sauvignon Blanc and Shiraz, both produced by Journey's End, were selected for the project and have been available at selected Checkers, Checkers Hyper and LiquorShop stores in the Western Cape since the end of May last year. Both wines are IPW-certified and cost R119.99 a bottle. The Sauvignon Blanc is described simply as "fresh and zesty" and the Shiraz as "juicy and easy drinking".

Sales have grown in the six months since the launch. "It's quite staggering how much carbon is being saved just with these two wines versus a glass bottle," Andrew says. About

50% of the carbon emissions from wine production comes from the glass bottle's manufacturing process and only about one third of glass is recycled.

Feedback from the trade has been fantastic. Retailers, pubs and restaurants have all expressed huge support for what Interpunkt is trying to do. Consumers are also responding positively. "They tell me all the time how pleased they are that there's finally a wine for them," Andrew says. "With a project like this, you have to lead the way and demonstrate that it's possible, effective, and appealing to all consumers, whether they're wine enthusiasts or not."

Understanding the motivation behind the decision to stock these wines has been fascinating. For some, sustainability is a no-brainer. "We've even had some places remove all the other wines from their wine list to sell these only," Andrew says. The bottle shape is a favourite among restaurants looking to offer more sustainable wines and some are now offering bag-in-box wines after eliminating glass completely.

## Future packaging

Interpunkt and Journey's End Vineyards are making great progress towards their initial goals, but stress there's still a long road ahead. "While I'm proud of our product and believe it achieves what we intended, the real challenge is getting it into as many hands as possible," Andrew says. With their wines being sold across the world, they're also succeeding in this regard.

Although they've accomplished what they set out to do – selling wine in paperboard packaging – much more still needs to be done to achieve true success. "Two products on the shelf aren't enough," Andrew says. "We need to see more wine brands embrace the technology and get behind the change. Glass has its place, but when it comes to casual wines for fairly immediate consumption, I don't believe glass is required."

Andrew predicts consumers' demand for sustainably produced wines will grow as they become more aware of how wine production impacts the environment. "Wineries will need to overcome these challenges if they want to remain relevant." ■