Most in the liquor industry would argue that packaging is important, especially when it comes to vodka. Clear bottles, intriguing shapes, long cork stoppers – vodka bottles have turned into works of art more than simple packaging. Level, Türi, Chopin, Vox, and Wyborowa – these are just a few of the brands whose bottles are changing the imported premium vodka category.

There’s no doubt that these eye-catching bottles help boost the sales of imported vodka: IRI data ending February 20th, 2005, states that imported sales by volume are up 13 percent in the domestic market. (25 percent of all spirits sold in 2004 were vodka, according to the Distilled Spirits Council.) Ultra-premium vodkas retail between $30 and $200 per bottle, and sales were up 21.7 percent in 2004, to 2.2 million cases. What sets vodkas apart on the flavor level is the type of ingredients used, but all vodkas are turning to innovative packaging to get their product noticed.
**ABSOLUT APEACH**

Bottle dressed in shades of pink, yellow and orange hues inspired by the skin of a peach. Its shape is modeled after a traditional Swedish medicine bottle. Each bottle is cleansed with pure Absolut vodka before it is filled.

**ARMANDALE**

Transparent bottle with a black banner and simple tartan design serves as a tribute to its Scottish origins. Carries a neck tag that gives a brief description of the production process of combining wheat and barley.

**BLAVOD**

Blavod bottle is designed to show off the unique color of the spirit - bold and straightforward. The black color of the vodka is offset by the large red logo and unique name of Blavod (short for Black Vodka). Every 750ml is gift wrapped in a zippered neoprene bottle cooler sleeve which accents the mystery of the vodka.

**BORU**

Broad shoulders and tapered torso of the molded bottle is meant to suggest a strong man. The sword and shield icon represents the Irish hero and warrior king, Brian Boru. Silver and black colors used in the label and cap are strong, macho colors.

**CHARBAY**

Elongated neck and extra-thick base appears to suspend the vodka. Bottle is blown, frosted and screen printed in France, where the perfume industry inspired mastery of bottle craftsmanship. Bottle’s artwork is designed to look great no matter which way it’s put back on the shelf.

**ARGENT**

The star on the label stands for the company name, Star Industries. Argent means “silver” in French; named after Martin Silver, the owner.

**BELVEDERE**

Cork system and strip stamp closure sends message of authenticity. Frosted bottle helps communicate that it is best consumed “icy cold”. See-through window allows consumer to sense the contents’ “purity”.

**BLUE ICE**

Name refers to the glaciers that are the source of the Rocky Mountain spring water. Bottle is sculpted to resemble a rugged glacier with smooth icicles. Colors on front label are a red white and blue color scheme symbolizing that it’s American.

**BURNETT’S**

Blown in crest in the glass on the back of the bottle visually supports proprietary heritage. Burnett’s logotype, crest and ribbon element tie into the visual equity of the long-established Burnett’s Gin brand. New proprietary 1.75L design will be introduced in October, extending package elements to the most popular size.

**CHOPIN**

Cork system and strip stamp closure sends message of authenticity. Frosted bottle sends message of “icy cold”. See-through window sends message of “purity”.

**REALITY**

A bottle with a transparent design, the Real part of the Real Vodka brand, is shown with a focus on its sleek and modern appearance.
**CIROC**  
The name Ciroc is a contraction of two French words: *cime*, meaning peak or summit top, and *roche*, meaning rock.  
Celebrates the Gaillac region from which it originates, which is home to an indigenous blue flower which inspired blue stone on bottle.  
Rooster emblem is a classic French symbol associated with the wine culture.

**DANZKA**  
Signature is its proprietary, metal bottle which is made to chill vodka at optimal temperatures.  
Only vodka offered in an aluminum bottle which is unbreakable and affordable.

**CITADELLE**  
Designed to communicate tradition and quality – capet wheat gives information on the origins of the grain and the blue color represents the Gensac spring.  
History about the distillery in the North of France with pictures of the Citadelle (sea fortress) and a boat (seafarers bringing back herbs and spices) on bottle.

**EMERALD**  
Designed by founder and president Russ Dale and San Franciscan graphic artist Tom Ingalls of Ingalls and Associates.  
Unique Emerald-shaped cap, designed by costume jewelry designer Dana Edelman.  
The French-made bottles are decorated outside of Paris and shipped to our distillery in Canada for filling.

**FRİS**  
Bottle is a tribute to the Danish heritage of clean and distinctive design.  
Unique shape mirrors the Danish master distiller’s approach to differentiate FRİS Vodka’s production method – freeze distillation.  
Each bottle carries the seal of the Royal Warrant of the Queen of Denmark.

**HANGAR ONE**  
Purpose of the bottle was to make it apparent that Hangar One is about what is inside.  
Hand-crafted product is from craftsmen working inside an old hangar, and the simpler the design the less intervention between the person who makes the vodka and the person who drinks it.

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**KETEL ONE**

Bottle design is reminiscent of the history of the Nolet Distillery which dates back to 1691. Shape comes from the history of Ketel One and dates back to the days of the stone bottle. Combination of the smooth and frosted glass provides a unique package.

**McCORMICK**

Lightweight PET bottle, easy handling and pouring, targets all consumers. Attractive packaging, exhibits shelf presence, consumers drawn to brand. Available in all sizes, satisfying all consumer needs.

**PEARL**

This tall, elegant bottle is made from highest quality French glass imported to the distillery in Western Canada. Because the bottle is not acid-etched, the quality of the glass and the Pearl Vodka inside is clear. The unique painted label makes Pearl Vodka easy to spot on the back bar or retail shelf. Each bottle of Pearl Vodka features the signature of Master Distiller, R.R. Stothers.

**SEAGRAM’S**

Bumpy bottle and antique-like label reflect tradition and heritage. Bold label color scheme portrays the brand’s quality. Font reflects the classic appeal that doesn’t go out of style.

**SKYY90**

Clear glass showcases the liquid with a subtle cobalt blue hue at the base. Bottle’s straight sides give way to a rounded top representing the movement of a bubble on a journey to the surface. Design is finished with chrome-colored closure, a quality cue of modern luxury design.

**PRAVDA**

Champagne bottle shape indicates the highest quality vodka. Cork finished. Pure crystal gem (tanzanite).

**SHAKERS**

Bottle is reminiscent of the art deco cocktail shakers popular during America’s post-prohibition period. Frosted bottle is adorned with a penguin, a symbol of prosperity that reflects the way most people consume vodka: cold.

**SMIRNOFF**

Cyrillic translation of “Smirnoff vodka” is embossed just below that neck. Embossed double-headed eagle logo signifies liberation, confidence and strength. Logo incorporates three Russian spirit award medals and the number 21, a reference to the proprietary Smirnoff recipe number.

**LEVEL**

The name Level communicates the vodka’s point of difference – the balance of smoothness and character. Bottle is frosted, tall and slim with balanced proportions. Has a heavy base and its front features a small, metallic silhouette of the Absolut bottle.

**STOLICHBAYA ELIT**

Sleek, elegant and simple bottle design. Bottle’s logo is comprised of fire and ice to represent the production process, from the flames of distillation to the freezing filtration process.
**STÖN**
Label carries the image of blue and grey water-washed stones
Neck of the bottle is tied with a fiber string with a blue glass stone
Handcrafted in Estonia

**THREE OLIVES**
Frosted bottle is designed to give it a younger, more urban feel
Black accents in design and cut-out martini glasses are art-deco elements
Tall, thin bottle and neck allows for easy holding and pouring

**VOX**
Packaged in a tall, column-shaped bottle made of clear Austrian glass with circles cut into the back designed by award-winning designer, Laura Handler
Elegant black label sits at the base of the bottle, acting as a pedestal to display the vodka inside

**JEAN-MARC XO**
Comes in a Cognac-style bottle, especially used for vodka
The “XO” displayed on the bottle symbolizes “The Very Best” in the Cognac category
Each bottle is numbered to show which number in order of production; this is special for the consumer because it is produced in such small batches.

**SVEDKA**
All bottles have Swedish flag on them
Packaging is minimalistic, unpretentious and contemporary

**ULTIMAT**
Each bottle is made from hand-blown crystal; no two are exactly the same.
A team of 12 Polish artisans are employed to hand make the bottles; each takes approximately 24 hours to craft.
Each bottle is actually two bottles; color is from the inside and the outer bottle is what creates the “bubble” effect seen on the boot.

**WYBOROWA**
After touring the Wyborowa Estate, renowned architect Frank Gehry was convinced that he was the person to design the bottle
Prismatic, seductive bottle portrays the elegance and smoothness of the spirit
Unique twisted shape distinguishes bottle

**ZYR**
Flask-like shape represents a smoothness in liquid and drinkability
The color blue, which is refreshing, inviting and thirst-quenching, was chosen to stand out among others
Broad shoulders suggest confidence and prestige and thick-glass base and cork finish represent elegance

**44 NORTH**
44 North is the latitude at which potatoes grow best (hence the seal of the Idaho Potato Commission)
Bottle look is fresh, clean and pure to reflect the spirit
Easy to hold and pour

**42 BELOW**
New Zealand is called “land of the long white cloud” so the bottle is tall and a visual of a long white cloud
Text is vertical from North to South to represent “Below”
Named after the location, on the 42nd parallel below the Equator; it is also 42% alcohol
Adam Rosen, brand manager for Pernod Ricard’s Wyborowa brand, says, “Packaging is one of the many ways to show the consumer how premium the product is.” And vodka companies are doing just that: Wyborowa hired architect Frank Gehry to design their bottle and even created a limited-edition bottle and gift box that retailed for $2,000. “The first draw to a luxury product is the packaging,” says Melissa Frank of Moët Hennessy USA, brand manager for Belvedere and Chopin brands. Marsha Miller, a designer with Parachute, a design agency who works on the Belvedere brand, remarks that the company is “making a promise to the consumer with the packaging.”

Brand managers also realize that vodka is not like other spirits in that sense; the image of the vodka is reflected in the packaging. Rosen says, “Vodka is about capturing attention. The category is much more image conscious than other liquor categories. With vodka the bottle is more important than any other beverage in today’s marketplace.”

Each aspect of the bottle is crucial, and three factors determine the design: the color, the shape, and the frost. “The shape and silhouette of the bottle is the most important thing in a dark bar,” says Kevin Richards, president of Christiania Spirits, who just launched a redesigned bottle. As Katz says, “The rules of entry for a new vodka brand are you need a tall bottle because you want it to stand out on the back bar, and retail shelves have been raised to accommodate the taller bottles like Grey Goose and Absolut. If you’re tall you’ll be placed next to them. You need a package that consumers are excited by. What vodka you drink is a huge statement, almost a badge, for most consumers.”

Vodka bottle closures have become another aspect of design that sets high-end vodkas apart from the lower-end brands. There are three options: a screw cap, artificial cork, and natural cork. The U.S. market wants the natural cork, according to Richards, but in terms of closures it’s a poor choice because of leakage and contamination. In Japan, for example, all vodkas must use screw cap by law. When choosing what closure to use, vodka brands must also consider how the closure will affect the overall look of the bottle. “When choosing our closure we had to ask, what does the bottle look like without the top on? We didn’t like the ridges of the screw cap and we chose artificial cork,” says Beleson.

But after companies spend months researching bottle design, do consumers really judge the taste of their product by the bottle? There’s no clear answer. “Image is more important than taste. In L.A., products are package-driven,” says J.P. Blanchard, a buyer at Wally’s Wines & Spirits in Los Angeles. Blanchard does see increased movement in his store with Wyborowa. “It’s the strongest sale I’ve seen in a long time. People are picking up the bottle and asking about it, people are reading articles about the bottle, and word of mouth is a big factor,” he says. “Packaging does matter. An example for us is Charbay. People buy it for the bottle but the taste keeps them coming back,” says Mark Mitchell, manager of D&M Wine and Liquor Co. in San Francisco. “Our customers may try something once because of the bottle but they won’t keep buying it if it doesn’t taste good.” Mitchell has not made any changes to his shelves for the new bottles. “If it doesn’t fit [the store shelves] we don’t carry it.”
What you need to know about Vodka

Vodka comes from the old Russian noun ‘voda’ meaning “little water.”

Vodka is a neutral spirit historically made from whatever agricultural crop is most abundant and cheap, but modern vodka is made principally from various grains, most often corn, rye and wheat.

By the 15th century, vodka had become so popular in Russia that the British ambassador to Moscow referred to it as “the Russian national drink.”

In 1972, the Russian government selected Stolichnaya® to be the only vodka produced and bottled for exportation, effectively creating an entirely new alcoholic beverage category in the U.S. – imported vodka.

The building on the label of the Stolichnaya bottle is the Muscova hotel.

Stolichnaya® came out with the first flavored vodka, Limonaya, in 1986.

One out of every four alcohol drinks consumed in the world is vodka or vodka based.

Vodka has been the number one selling distilled spirit in the U.S. for more than 25 years.

The most popular gift in Eastern Europe is a bottle of vodka.

Although originating in Eastern Europe, vodka is now produced in countries all over the world, including Japan, Italy, France, Belarus, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Ukraine, and Lithuania – just to name a few.

Stolichnaya elit uses a patented “freeze filtration” process once used to create vodka for the Russian Czars.

OFF-PREMISE

But in other parts of the country, customers are after a different experience. Larry Parker, assistant manager at Goody Goody Liquor Stores in the Dallas, Texas, sees the opposite among his customers. “They’re buying a higher end vodka for the quality of what’s in the bottle rather than what the bottle looks like,” he says. Parker carries over 100 different vodkas and is making adjustments to his shelves to accommodate the new, taller bottles.

Warren Radford, wine and spirit consultant at Astor Wines and Spirits in New York City, sees a similar attitude in his store, and carries 60 different vodka brands to satisfy customer taste. “Customers who buy high-end vodka are interested in the ingredients. A lot of our customers are trying the vodkas in bars and then coming in and buying a bottle. Grey Goose is our number one selling brand but Zyr and 42 Below from New Zealand are selling well,” he says. As far as retail shelves, Radford sees bottles that don’t fit the shelves at a distinct disadvantage. “If the bottles are too tall then they have to be placed in a separate area and I think that hurts them,” he says.

In Chicago, Brett Pontoni, specialty spirits buyer at Binny’s, sees the image carrying the category. “Vodka is a uniquely image-driven category. The amount of advertising and the image you create is more important than taste,” he says. “In most cases the sales are driven by the product image and on-premise promotion.” Pontoni notes that Chicago is a big vodka market because of a large Polish and Eastern European population, and carries about 100 different types of vodka to satisfy customer needs.

ON-PREMISE

On the restaurant side, an eye-catching bottle can mean increased sales, according to Brin McGroy, beverage manager at Public, a restaurant in New York City. “Our customers will ask us about a vodka if a bottle catches their eye. Packaging is definitely a key factor,” he says. McGroy displays the vodkas at the front of the bar, and for him the packaging is important. “I like bottles that are slim and sexy. The packaging is important when I’m deciding which brands to carry – it has to be eye-catching.” And his customers are drinking the 25 different vodkas both in mixed drinks and straight up. Brent Lamberti, a bartender at Son Cubano restaurant in New York City, compares premium vodkas to premium Champagne brands like Cristal. “I think it’s totally based on marketing. It’s more a social decision than anything else. They are ordering it [premium vodka] on reputation, just to say they can afford it,” he says. “People just want to say Grey Goose.” From a professional standpoint, Lamberti notes that the marketing support is more important than the bottle. “The shape of the bottle doesn’t influence my buying decision. We look to see if the company is behind it [with marketing dollars]. If they aren’t then we have to make up specialty drinks to push it,” says Lamberti.

With a plethora of high-end vodkas available, consumers aren’t often loyal to one brand, either, unlike with other spirit categories. “Scotch is much more of a one-brand liquor than vodka,” says Blanchard.

“In 1995 the packaging was getting nicer and brands were talking more about ingredients. Now, the process, the ingredients, the country of origin, and the bottle are all important. Everything is getting better,” says Katz. Packaging is a great entrée point for consumers, but marketing dollars are still needed to drive continued demand in the crowded field.”

elit on the Rocks

1 part Stoli elit vodka

Pour over ice. Garnish with green olives, onions or a lemon twist if desired.

Please enjoy our products responsibly.