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From the Denver Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/denver/news/2019/07/19/denver-bigsbys-folly-aluminum-bottles.html>

Denver winery 1st in the country to package in 500-ml aluminum bottles

Jul 19, 2019, 7:48am MDT **Updated: Jul 19, 2019, 8:46am MDT**

The two-year-old Bigsby's Folly Craft Winery has barely begun to scratch the retail market in the Denver area, but it is launching a first-in-the-nation product today that it hopes can revolutionize the way that wine is packaged — and vault it into the position of a state and national leader.

Marla and Chad Yetka, the married couple that launched the Denver winery, have put their product into 500-milliliter "cottles" — fully recyclable aluminum containers with screw-top caps that can be taken into parks and concerts and other places where glass bottles are illegal or at least inefficient. The 200 cases that the couple had bottled will start out at [Argonaut Wine & Liquor](#) and at select entertainment venues around town initially,



PROVIDED BY BIGSBY'S FOLLY

The winery's "cottles" are 500-milliliter recyclable aluminum bottles filled with wine.

though they hope to broaden its reach in the near future if the product turns out to be as popular as they think it can be.

Wineries nationally and locally have been canning their products for the past 10 years or so, and some vintners have experimented with other alternative packaging designs such as boxes, bags and pouches as well. But after six months of searching for a prototype that they too could use, the Yetkas determined that nothing of this size and material had been put onto the market as a wine vessel before, so they decided that they were just going to find a company to make it first for them.

The 500-milliliter size of the cottles — two-thirds of the typical volume of bottled wine — means that a couple or friends could share the beverage more easily than they can the 250- and 375-milliliter cans that are more common on the market, Marla said in an interview Thursday. Meanwhile, the recyclable aluminum packaging, which is lined with a special material so that the wine doesn't come into direct contact with the metal, should appeal to oenophiles who are environmentally conscious, on the go or just looking for something different, she said.

With the minimal investment the winery has made into the packaging — it had about 4,800 bottles produced by CCL Industries of Sonoma, California — Bigsby's Folly is dipping its toe into the cottle waters, hedging its bets a bit on consumer behavior. But Marla said she has heard major producers from the Napa Valley region are exploring the same idea, and she hopes that being first to market can give her business a small leg up as it looks to grab the attention of wine drinkers in Colorado.

"If it works, we plan to get it out there as quickly as we can and keep the lead," Chad added.

Since its 2017 opening, Bigsby's Folly has concentrated almost all of its energy in sales from its taproom in the River North Art District at 3563 Wazee St. Its growth in that time has been impressive — about 50 percent per year for each of its two full years of existence — but the Yetkas felt that increased distribution was the next logical step in their evolution.

It's put three of its top varietals into the cottles — its Rosé of Grenache, Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon. If the concept proves popular enough that the cottles become somewhat ubiquitous around Denver, it will go back for a second bottling in late November in northern California, where its grapes are harvested and where its head winemaker is based.

The one place you definitely won't be able to find the cottles in the near future is in the winery itself. Because of its vintner's restaurant license, the only wine it can sell for off-premise consumption is that which is bottled on site.

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