

THE Q OF BOTTLE DECORATION

- By Katharina Woitczyk -

From the street outside this discreet building no one can imagine what hides behind these walls. Yet the building in question is the headquarters of the world's leading producer of wire-sleeves, wire-sleeve producing and wire-sleeve laying machines. Tiny at first sight, the assembly plant of Meynard & Fils is actually enormous. The building consists of a small entry hall where several of the first wire-sleeve producing and wire-sleeve laying machines are exposed. A huge hall follows with three big machines producing wire-sleeves at high

speed; and last but not least a tiny little room stuffed with tools and machine components.

The exciting thing about the location is that as soon as one passes the huge entrance gate situated on the Quais des Chartrons in Bordeaux, the whole place looks just like a laboratory of Major Boothroyd better known as "Q", the genius inventor of James Bond's miraculous weapons. My curiosity is roused. The "Q" of Meynard & Fils is Patrick Meynard owner and chief executive officer of the company, since the sudden and unexpected death of his father in

2005. The "Q" of bottle decoration is not only much younger than the one in the movies, he is also assisted by two young engineers, one working on his computer, the other one filing and frenetically polishing big metal blocks. The team is completed by several workers recharging and maintaining the wire-sleeve producing machines in the big hall, and the commercial staff who we were to later meet on the first floor. "No photos here please", Patrick Meynard says, while we cross the hall with the wire-sleeve producing machines. Like in all industrial activities, Patrick

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FABRIQUE DE CLISSAGES POUR BOUTEILLES
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L. MEYNARD & Fils



Patrick Meynard

Q

Meynard wants to keep his latest inventions secret. "These machines are the fastest wire-sleeve producing machines currently on the market and we are working on a new one, which you can see here." He says as he waves over to another huge machine, the last in the row, which at the very moment is being tested.

Back in the entry hall Patrick Meynard explains, "The Meynard & Fils company was founded in 1880. At that time wire-sleeves still had a very practical function and not just a fashionable one. They were sealed around most of Bordeaux's bottles, which at that time were mainly bottled by Bordeaux's wine merchants in their cellars. The wire-sleeves closed with a seal displaying the Château owner's coat of arms. They guaranteed that the wine had been tasted and identified by the owner before and after the bottling." Therefore the wire-sleeve signalled authenticity, it was an anti-fraud device.

This historical and practical aspect was so little known that even Patrick Meynard himself was unaware of it until his recent trip to California, where in a museum he saw the exposition of very old Bordeaux bottles with wire-sleeves that had been produced by his ancestors.

The sealing of wire-sleeves was only abandoned when most Châteaux began bottling their wines directly on the property and the indication "mise en bouteille au château" became wide spread.

But by that time the Spaniards had already discovered the fashionable aspect of the wire-sleeves for a great number of their bottles. Today the Spanish taste for wire-sleeves has developed so far, that most people believe

that they are a Spanish invention... And yet most of the wire-sleeves on Spanish bottles are produced by Meynard & Fils. Today the most important function of wire sleeves is decoration. The beautiful ornamental element can be found on bottles of wine, cognac, armagnac, absinthe, any other kinds of spirits or even on candles and other decorative items.

Today Patrick Meynard himself is the first to reintroduce the wire-sleeve on Bordeaux bottles, adorning the bottles of his own Château Lalaudey, situated in the Médoc appellation called Moulis. Since the invention of the first wire-sleeve machine by Meynard & Fils, the production procedure and the machines produced by the company have both enormously improved. The first machines could decorate only 350 bottles per hour. Today the fastest machine decorates 3900 bottles per hour and Patrick Meynard's engineers are working on an even faster model.

The amazing thing about Meynard & Fils is that not only do they decorate bottles and sell wire-sleeves, to their customers, but they also invent the machines to produce the wire-sleeves. They even produce the machines to put the wire-sleeves on the bottles.

More precisely they sell or loan a laying machine to their client and the client buys the wire-sleeves to be put on the bottles. In short, when you think wire-sleeves, you should think Meynard & Fils.

The reason why the company is so successful is certainly due to the high quality of their wire-sleeves, of their machines and last but not least their adaptive customer service. Meynard & Fils are able to find a solution for any unique bottle shape and wire-sleeve design.

The concept works out so well that, Meynard & Fils has been contacted by Francis

Ford Coppola who already decorates the premium bottle of his wine range with a wire-sleeve by Meynard & Fils. Thus the "Q" of bottle decoration is the first to make it to Hollywood !

Yet this is not the first time Meynard & Fils provides for the world of glitz and glamour. The first client was Yves Saint Laurent, to whom Meynard & Fils provided the wire-hoods for the stoppers of their "Champagne" perfume flask, which after the "prohibition" of the perfume became a collector's item.

It is also Meynard & Fils who provides the special wire-hoods for the Paco Rabane designed bottle of Joy Armagnac. (Featured in the TASTED 2008 summer edition)

Meynard & Fils is of course well implanted on the Spanish market where the company provides the machines and wire-sleeves to prestigious clients such as Marques de Riscal.

And as anyone who has studied even the most basic ideas of marketing cannot deny : packaging is important. As consumers pay more and more attention to detail, they are getting increasingly attentive to product appearance. Therefore it becomes more and more important to choose the right "look". Product appearance is a language of signals to the consumers the product desires. Young women will not be sensitive to the same visual codes as young men of the same age. Older men and women will again have other differing visual codes. A person's code also depends upon his or her cultural and social level.

This is one of the reasons why Meynard & Fils offers individual packaging solutions for each and every one of their clients. Thus giving them the possibility to develop the exact look for their products and their customers.

*Individual solutions for every individual,
nobody does it better than Meynard & Fils,
the "Q" of bottle decoration !*