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**Green Inc.**

Energy, the Environment and the Bottom Line

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## **A Greener Way to Drink Wine? Try a Barrel.**

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One Manhattan restaurant is cutting down its use of wine bottles — with bar-top barrels.

At [Sojourn](#), a dark, candlelit restaurant on New York's upper east side, two patrons — a man in a black polo shirt and a woman in a white, flowered dress — sit at a table near the bar and order two glasses of wine. Instead of opening a bottle, however, the bartender returns with two glasses filled with wine from a wooden barrel that sits atop the bar.

The barrel, from [DeLoach Vineyards](#) of Santa Rosa, Calif., contains roughly 10 liters of wine — slightly more than a standard 12-bottle case.

But the real advantage may be in the amount of energy saved — and emissions avoided — by using barrels instead of bottles.

According to Jean-Charles Boisset, the president of [Boisset Family Estates](#), whose portfolio includes DeLoach, the barreling method reduces the carbon footprint involved in producing a bottle of wine by a factor of 10.

Inside the barrel is a replaceable bag made from recycled paper, which holds the wine. When the bag is full, it weighs roughly one-tenth of a case of wine packaged in glass bottles, which helps reduce the fuel needed to transport the wine to stores and restaurants. Using the barrel also renders raw materials such as glass, cork and labels — and the energy needed to produce them — unnecessary.

The savings in energy translates to savings in cost, too. Barrels, for instance, are more effective in preventing wine from spoiling, according to Stanton Du Toit, one of the owners of Sojourn. By using the barrel, Mr. Du Toit said he saves about 25 percent, or \$30 to \$40, on the equivalent of a case of wine.

Those savings can then be passed on to the consumer. A glass pinot noir from the barrel at Sojourn costs between \$9 and \$11, Mr. Du Toit said, while comparable glass from a bottle would cost at least \$16.

But how does it taste?

Pretty good according to several customers (and the unrefined palate of a reporter).

“When people come in and ask about the barrel, their initial apprehension is understood,” said Mr. Du Toit. “But once they taste it they are surprised at the quality. The temperature control is great.”

DeLoach is not the only winery innovating on packaging.

As we’ve noted before on Green Inc., several companies are exploring [bottles that use less glass](#).

Meanwhile, [Red Truck](#), a Sonoma, Calif.-based winery, has been distributing wine in plastic “[mini-barrels](#)” on a limited basis since last spring.

Each mini-barrel can be recycled, holds the equivalent of four bottles of wine, and cuts the weight of the delivered wine in half, according to Katy Leese, a co-founder of Red Truck.

The company said it expects to expand distribution of the mini-barrels soon.

And [MAS Wine Company](#) of Cloverdale, Calif. has been distributing wine to restaurants in stainless steel mini-tanks, holding the equivalent of 15 to 20 bottles, for the last three years, according to Andy Woehl, the company’s president.

“Since that time,” Mr. Woehl said, “we have not used over 70,000 glass bottles.”