Bottle Tops Encyclopedia Article

Bottle Tops

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Cork has been used since antiquity as a stopper for bottles because of its compressive abilities. During the Renaissance, cork stoppers were commonplace, and cork-oak trees were grown and processed in the Pyrenees Mountains especially for this purpose. Wine bottles were commonly sealed with oiled hemp. When Pierre Pérignon (1638-1715) invented champagne in 1688, he found that the gaseous pressure inside his bottles blew out the hemp stoppers. To solve the problem, he invented corks held in place by wire. During the 1800s, Hiram Codd's glass ball stopper was widely used in England. It was held against a rubber gasket by gas pressure within the bottle. The stopper of choice in the United States was invented by Charles G. Hutchinson in 1879. In this design, a rubber gasket inside the bottle was attached to a wire loop that extended outside the bottle; a blow to the loop released the gasket, while a pull on the loop closed it. The modern metal bottle cap was developed by the prolific Maryland inventor William Painter, who patented his first stopper in 1885. By 1891, his definitive design, a cork-lined metal cap with a corrugated edge that is crimped around the bottle lip, appeared. Painter called his invention the " crown cap," founded the Crown Cork and Seal Company to market it, and became very wealthy from it. The crown cap was the industry standard for nearly 80 years. In 1955 the crown cap's cork liner was replaced by plastic, and a high-speed machine to inspect crown seals was introduced in 1958. In the 1960s, the Coca-Cola company offered lift-top crown caps. The push-on, twist-off cap was first developed for baby food. Screw caps for carbonated beverages appeared in the 1960s and 1970s and are the standard today.