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The Fate of Recycled Christmas Wine Bottles

By [KATE GALBRAITH](#)

Photo credit: Associated Press/Stellar Organics

Earlier this month, my colleague Matt Richtel and I wrote about the [collapse in prices for recycled goods](#). Paper, cardboard and plastic had all plunged, and a few communities were even suspending their recycling programs as a result.

Glass was relatively untouched. Why? The main reason, experts say, is that it gets reused domestically. Whereas paper and plastics are shipped to China to be recycled, the glass is often crushed in the United States.

So what do those wine bottles go to make? Many go back into containers. The Glass Packaging Institute recently [announced](#) that its members will aim to use at least 50 percent recycled glass in their jars or bottles by 2013. Currently the institute estimates that the average recycled content in glass containers is about 25 percent (but 60 percent for Europe, which is better at recycling). Some states mandate it: in California, all glass beverage containers must include 35 percent recycled glass, and 50 percent in Oregon, according to the Institute.

Recycled glass goes into an array of things, like [jewelry](#) and even [colorful mulch](#).

Plenty of glass also goes into making more wine bottles. The [Gallo Glass Company](#), a California bottle maker, uses 35 to 55 percent recycled glass in its clear bottles, and up to 80 percent for dark green bottles. One benefit is that recycled glass “doesn’t take as much energy to turn it back into molten glass,” according to Mike Ball, a technical specialist there. Green glass, he said, is able to use more recycled content because it is darker, whereas clear (or “flint”) glass with high recycled content is prone to streaking — “like somebody has taken a crayon” to the bottle, he said.

With all the recycling going on, perhaps next year’s Christmas presents will be made with glass from this year’s tipple.

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