Coopers' yeast sent to Suntory in good taste

Adelaide's Coopers Brewery has an agreement, and a new export opportunity, with Japanese distilling company Suntory under which live waste yeast from their brewing process will now be used to improve the flavour and complexity of Japan's favourite whisky.

Yeast used by Coopers doubles in size during the beer making process. About half is retained for future brews but the excess is normally disposed of under an agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency. The new arrangement with Suntory provides Coopers with an economic return for the waste yeast, while also providing substantial savings in disposal costs and environmental impact.

Coopers Managing Director, Dr Tim Cooper, said an initial trial shipment of two tonnes of yeast sent in October to Japan via a special refrigerated container had been followed with a shipment of 20 tonnes in November.

'Coopers produces around 600 tonnes of live waste yeast a year and we are confident that Suntory will eventually take it all,' he said. 'We believe this will develop into a long-term arrangement.'

Dr Cooper said live yeast would be added to Suntory's 'wash', which is distilled during the production of whisky, and would add complexity and depth to the flavour.

'Ale yeast produces additional pleasant fruity flavours when added with distilling yeast in the wash, and this can only be obtained from ale producers,' he said.

Waste yeast from Coopers' traditional ale-making process is now being recycled for Japanese whisky drinkers. Coopers Brewery

'Yeast used in the production of lagers is not suitable for high temperature fermentation of distiller's wash and does not produce the desired flavour.

'Suntory was using ale yeast from a UK brewer. However, falling demand for ales in the UK meant this source was no longer available and Suntory began looking around the world for a replacement,' he said.

Dr Cooper highlighted that his brewery was one of the few in the world still producing traditional ales, and the relative proximity of Japan and Australia meant that taking Coopers' waste yeast was an attractive proposition to Suntory.

A sweet European deal for Plantic's bioplastic

Innovative Melbourne-based packaging company Plantic Technologies has won its first major customer in the European market, after signing a contract with Nestlé in the UK for the use of its bioplastic in the food giant's Dairy Box chocolate range.

The Dairy Box tray will now be the largest product line using Plantic bioplastic, with Nestlé requiring over six million trays a year. The implications of this for the reduction of waste plastic to landfill are of course significant.

The bioplastic tray is made from maize starch, a renewable resource, and is compostable and biodegradable. Its most unusual feature is that it begins to disintegrate within moments on contact with water, and will therefore disintegrate within three months when placed in landfill or a compost heap.

Plantic Technologies was created three years ago by the Australian Cooperative Research Centre for International Food Manufacture & Packaging Science to commercialise the intellectual property it developed to produce plastic from plant material. The bioplastic, which has been used in the local market for two years, can compete on cost and functionality with petrochemical-based plastics.

Plantic's bioplastic is now finding mainstream success in the international packaging market. Plantic Technologies Pty Ltd.

'We are very excited to be working with Nestlé on this packaging initiative,' commented Frank Glatz, the General Manager of Plantic Technologies in Europe. 'We believe their decision to utilise Plantic for Dairy Box validates the benefits of the technology to the environment and shows that Plantic is a high-quality packaging option.'

Plantic entered the inaugural UK Trade & Investment international business awards in 2004, and was a finalist in the award for new business entrant in the UK. It has staff based across Europe working with a range of companies to provide environmental packaging solutions. It hopes to make further progress with other products in the European market soon.

More information:
www.plantic.com.au