

ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF ALUMINIUM FOIL

Policy makers, industry stakeholders, NGOs and media representatives were invited to attend an event jointly organised by the European Aluminium Association (EAA) and the European Aluminium Foil Association (EAF) to celebrate the 100th anniversary of aluminium foil. The invitees assisted to a live cooking show and could taste quality dishes using aluminium foil.



Aluminium foil today and tomorrow

Thanks to its unique combination of properties such as the absolute barrier function, its flexibility and formability, aluminium foil has established itself over the decades as a universally recognised and indispensable material for many packaging applications such as lids on yoghurt pots, chocolate wrappings or foil containers for ready-made meals. European Aluminium Foil Association (EAF) President François Coëffic commented: "The alufoil industry has established itself in this new millennium through innovative, ingenious and high-tech solutions. Alufoil supports today's requirements for consumer friendly and resource efficient products. We can be truly proud of our achievements in making aluminium foil a world class multi-functional, modern and technically sophisticated material for packaging, household foil and a number of industrial markets."

EAA Packaging group chairman John Gardner insisted that "resource efficiency is paramount for today's products. In terms of energy savings lighter packaging equates to less fuel consumption and reduced emissions from transport. The ability to create portion packs helps to prevent food and drinks spoilage and waste."

Today's aluminium foil applications demonstrate the consumer friendliness. They vary from aseptic beverage cartons, wrappers, lids, blister and strip packs and more variations are in the pipeline. Also, aluminium foil is fully recyclable and modern separation techniques allow foil in household waste or separate collection systems to be extracted and recycled at a fraction of its original production energy. Very thin (laminated) foil based applications can also be incinerated with energy recovery.

Aluminium foil now plays a crucial role in everyone's daily life through applications in the food, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics industry. Aluminium foil is embracing new markets every day and is a truly resource efficient solution.

The aluminium foil's history...

Since its creation in 1910, when Robert Victor Neher patented it as a replacement for tin foil, aluminium foil has expanded to more and more markets. One of the earliest applications has been in chocolate wrapping while aluminium foil already entered the dairy sector in the 1920s, establishing itself ten years later as “the cheapest form of ‘keep-fresh’ packaging in every household.”

After the Second World War alufoil began a spectacular period of growth with worldwide alufoil production quadrupling to 280,000 tonnes between 1950 and 1960. At the same time both rolling speeds and rolling widths increased dramatically, helping to meet the high demand for converted products. With rolls of household foil spreading in Europe over the following decades, the spread of beverage cartons and the first use of an aluminium–plastic laminate for a famous well-known effervescent tablet for headaches in 1978, aluminium foil conquered more and more markets.

By the end of the 1990s aluminium foil was accepted as an innovative material for almost all packaging applications with expressions such as “foil-sealed for freshness” becoming commonplace on branded packs. Aluminium foil was also responsible for the growth of a new market for easy-open ‘gourmet’ pet food containers.

Successes in lightweight packaging have resulted in material savings of more than 30% in the 2000s and this has in turn provided growth in markets for resource efficient packaging options.

The European Aluminium Foil Association is the international body representing companies engaged in the rolling and rewinding of aluminium household foil and in the manufacture of aluminium foil containers and a wide range of flexible packaging items. Its more than 100 members include companies in Western, Central and Eastern Europe. EAFA’s foil roller members account for about 98 per cent of the total European foil market and represent nearly all countries in Europe, including Russia and Turkey. They supply thousands of customers including large international operating ‘fast moving consumer goods’ companies with well-known food and drinks products.

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