

New Steel Drums – The Perpetually Sustainable Choice

Sustainability in American industry is no longer a laudable goal—it is a business imperative. Almost universally in manufacturing, for example, suppliers are required to have a definitive, robust sustainability program in effect as purchasers in every link of the supply chain require one. A key element of such programs involves a focus on materials in manufacturing that have the capability to be recycled and/or reused.

Steel, which comprises almost the entirety of the materials used to produce a steel drum, is the most recycled material on the planet. According to the **American Iron and Steel Institute**, steel is recycled more than all other materials combined, with a recycling rate of 88 percent. Steel can be continuously recycled with no degradation in performance—a vital attribute for keeping products safe and secure as they move through the supply chain.

The life cycle of steel is a tribute to its metallurgical prowess, which makes it the perpetual raw material. Steel drums are produced from steel that is manufactured through one of two processes, resulting in giant rolls of product delivered to packaging producers. At the drum manufacturing facility, these rolls of cold-rolled steel are fabricated-cut, bent and shaped—to exact drum measurements and specifications.

Newly manufactured steel drums are then transported to the customer for filling with a wide variety of contents—liquid or solid—and both hazardous and non-hazardous materials, or delivered to a distributor for resale. Upon delivery of a loaded container to the filler’s customer, the packaged product is consumed and the drum is emptied.

At this point, the versatility of a steel drum becomes evident. It can either be reconditioned for reuse or recycled and reduced to scrap steel. Reconditioned steel drums can be used again to transport product from filler to customer. If scrapped, drums that contain hazardous residue must be completely cleaned before being sent to a scrap yard where they can be used to make new steel, beginning, again, its unique life cycle.

Today, two out of every three tons of new steel are produced from recycled steel and used to build millions of consumer goods, including automobiles, appliances—and even steel drums! Their endless recyclability and capacity to endure makes steel drums the very definition of sustainability.

