

C - Canned drinks

Soft drinks have been available in cans for more than 70 years, with the first launched in 1938. Cans are made from either steel or aluminium and today canned soft drinks have become ubiquitous. The first aluminum can was used in 1957, a ring-pull for the can was introduced in 1962 and the soft drink vending machine in 1965. The modern tab, which remains attached to the can when opened, thus reducing litter, was invented in 1975.

The manufacturing of the cans is a remarkably high-precision process. The cans are made in two parts – the can itself and the lid - and are filled before the top is crimped on. The main challenge is the fragility of the empty cans, which have walls less than 1/10 millimetre thick. The filling and sealing operations need to be extremely fast and precise. The filling head centres the can using gas pressure, purges the air, and lets the beverage flow down the sides of the can. The lid is placed on the can and then crimped into place in two steps. Filled cans usually have pressurised gas inside, which renders them stiff enough for easy handling.