

Balance of wine power shifts to anglophones

8 Feb 2007 by JR

Every two years at around this time, Vinexpo commissions some research to draw attention to its forthcoming wine fair in Bordeaux in June. This year's offering tells us that by 2010 the British will be spending more on wine than any other European country.

British wine drinkers are steadily trading up. The researchers say that sales of bottles priced at more than \$5 (£2.90) accounted for nearly half of volume in 2005, a rise of 40% since 2001 (although I must say that most visitors to this site will be intrigued by all those wines available at less than £2.90 a bottle...). The amount of wine consumed each year by the average Briton is also forecast to grow at 3.7% in the ten years from 2001 to 2010 – three and a half times faster than the growth in world consumption.

Vinexpo's researchers also predict that the US will overtake France in the next five years as the world's largest wine market. (Of course the US tends to be the biggest market in the world for all sorts of things – the novelty is that it has taken so long for wine drinking to embed itself so fully in American culture.)

Put this together with the increasing importance of wine producing countries such as Australia and the US and it would seem that the balance of power in the world of wine is shifting definitively towards English-speakers (which, it occurs to me, should be great news for anyone who might happen to be writing about wine in English).

Between 2001 and 2005 UK retail wine sales rose by a quarter to reach more than £4.9 billion. By 2010 retail sales will reach nearly £5.5 billion at which point the British will be spending more on wine than the French, Germans or Italians and making the UK the biggest retail wine market in Europe.

The growth in UK retail value is viewed as a long term trend explained by rises in the amount of wine drunk, by a trend to drink better quality wine and by high UK tax on wine which is among the highest in Europe.

Vinexpo's researchers (who don't seem as convinced about the growth in American wine drinking) predict that by 2010 the ranking of countries by total *volume* of wine drunk will be: France, Italy, the US, Germany and then the UK.

In 2005 British wine drinkers consumed nearly 1.7 billion bottles of grape wine. This was equivalent to nearly 27 litres per person of legal drinking age a year, roughly the same as Australia (28.3 litres) or Holland (28.6 litres) but a long way behind Denmark (38.3 litres) or Germany (36.6).

The Vinexpo researchers are particularly excited by the dramatic increase in rosé consumption in the UK, which grew by 63% between 2001 and 2005. Consumption of rosé is forecast to rise a further 25% by 2010.

For the first time in the Vinexpo's survey's 10 year history, Russia and China appeared in the top 10 markets in terms of consumption, and are forecast to continue growing strongly in the next five years.

Vinexpo takes place June 17-21 this year.