

Consumers see a place for weaker wines

22 May 2007 by JR

Over one in three women (35%) and one in four men (27%) believe that lower alcohol wines are becoming more fashionable according to the May Consumer Intelligence report issued today by the Wine & Spirit Trade Association (WSTA) and research organisation Wine Intelligence.

Fifty nine per cent of all UK regular wine drinkers claim to read the alcohol content of a bottle of wine before purchasing, but only half of those say it is important when deciding what wine to buy. They consider seven other factors more important when choosing a wine including grape variety, promotional offer, brand, country of origin, recommendation by friend or family and region of origin.

Consumers also link higher alcohol levels with better quality and better value for money [*This seems slightly at odds with the report's overall conclusion – JR*].

Other key findings from the report include:

White wine is still more popular than red wine with consumers, whilst the growth in rosé sales is driven by regular rosé consumers drinking more rosé, rather than a significant growth in the number of rosé consumers.

Chardonnay is still the top white wine varietal, but Pinot Grigio is challenging Sauvignon Blanc for second place.

Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon lead the red varietals from Shiraz and Pinot Noir.

Consumers still prefer wines from Australia over French wines although there appears to be a slight decline in this phenomenon.

Consumers who buy some of the most recognised American wine brands do not necessarily associate them with the USA. [*interesting... JR*]

One in three consumers say they spend between £4 and £4.99 in the off trade, one in three say they spend more than £5 and only one in four say they spend between £3 and £3.99.

More consumers are spending over £12 on a bottle of wine in the on- trade.

Grape variety is still seen as more important than promotional offer by consumers when choosing a wine [*I wonder if the supermarkets would agree with this finding – JR?*].

Jeremy Beadles, Chief Executive of the WSTA commented:

"The findings from our first Consumer Intelligence Report support our view that consumers are interested in a wider range of lower alcohol wines particularly when they are drinking them midweek or at lunch time. Retailers and wine producers are interested in expanding the range of lower alcohol wines they can offer consumers.

However, some technical elements of the European Wine Regime are reducing the opportunity for wine makers to develop and market low strength alcohol wines, and we are currently seeking changes to the regulations to reverse these barriers to consumer demand. A number of perfectly safe wine making technologies used to reduce naturally occurring alcohol levels in other wine producing countries are prohibited within the European Union." (This is a reference to some of the points raised in [Grappling with British bureaucracy](#).)

Brian Howard, Business Development Director, of Wine Intelligence added: "While mid- alcohol still remains the compelling proposition for many consumers, the real breakthrough here is in the consumer support for below-12% propositions, and why. We live in interesting times, in terms of new external forces at work beginning to influence wine consumer behaviour".