

European wines are flavour of the month once

By Martin Hickman, Consumer Affairs Correspondent

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After a decade of falling sales, European wines are staging a comeback against the full-bodied fruity blockbusters from Australia and America.

British drinkers bought an extra 20 million bottles of chablis, chianti and rioja and other styles from the leading "Old World" countries while the two New World superpowers lost market share, market research reveals.

Growth has been particularly strong for Spain and Italy, both up 10 per cent, a combined £96m, during the last half of 2009 and first half of 2010, according to figures from the analysts AC Nielsen.

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They show that France lost 2 per cent of its sales during the period.

A range of factors are behind the revival of interest in Europe's vineyards, say experts, including a greater interest in buying wines to accompany home-cooked meals during the downturn. Changes in exchange rates – the pound has fallen – have also made European wine more affordable.

Although sales for several New World states such as Chile and New Zealand have also recorded strong growth, the US, which has dominated the UK trade with a winning formula of big brands, bold flavours and low prices, has slipped.

For the 12 months to 15 May Australian wine sales edged up only £7m to £1.1bn, meaning its share shrank worse, slipping by £23m to £764m, shedding 5.3 million bottles and 6 per cent of its market share.

By contrast, France lost 2 per cent of its sales to £728m, but Italian wine surged by £61m to £668m, up 14 per cent, a rise of 8.2 million bottles.

Two New World countries also fared well: Chile, the big success story of the past five years, put on £87m of sales, while New Zealand added £64m to £246m.

Julian Dyer, senior wine buyer for Sainsbury's, said: "We are seeing a stronger growth in Italian and French wine that's a complete reversal of the trends we've seen for the last 10 years. Partly that's due to particular product resurgence of interest in the old-fashioned, classic wines."

Retailers were concentrating on making Old World wines easy to buy with labelling explaining the grapes us around the Old World is that they are complex wines with funny names that are difficult to pronounce and it understand, explaining what's in them and what they will taste like," Mr Dyer said.

He said that French and Italian wines had recorded annual rises of over 10 per cent.

Simon Field, a fine-wine expert at the London merchant Berry Brothers, said that while the likes of Jacob's (British drinkers, Old World wine makers had been able to borrow some of New World's techniques such as losing the complexity and elegance of the fruit from old vines.

He said: "I think fundamentally the move has been against the fruit-bomb style."

Best Old World Wines by Richard Ehrlich

These wines are a good place to start:

France

Domaine de l'Aumonier 2008, Touraine £8.95, Stone Vine & Sun, 01962 712351, www.stonevine.co.uk

A cracking Sauvignon Blanc from the Loire, fresh, crisp and full of beguiling citrus flavours.

PH Wine Cuvée Balthazar 2007, £9.99, Waitrose

Fantastic Syrah from the Languedoc, with depth to compete with some Rhône more expensive counterparts

Italy

Tesco Finest Nero d'Avola 2008, £6.49, Tesco

Sicily is making full use of this potentially outstanding grape variety. Deep and rich in colour and flavour.

Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Gavi 2009, £7.99, Sainsbury's

Extraordinary quality for a Gavi at this price: these Piemontese whites don't often come cheap. Complex bu

Spain

Tesco Finest Old Vines Tempranillo 2008, £6.99, Tesco

Spain's greatest red grape variety (the backbone of Rioja). Fat, rich, spicy.

Torres Viña Esmeralda 2009, £7.49, Waitrose and Majestic

A Moscatel/Gewürztraminer blend. Flowery, with the typical lychee flavour.

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BoozeMonkey 6 hours ago

Little wonder that European wines are making a comeback with the favourable exchange fantastic bargains from Spain, Portugal and Chile. Australian wines just cannot compete c 40% against the pound in the past five years.

Another problem is the cost of production: if you look around the wine shelves in any Spa drinkable wines from £1.50 (which is remarkable when you consider the cost of productio and the fact that the supermarket are also taking their cut...). And if you're paying £5+ p disappointed. The same cannot be said of Aussie wines though: the bottom end of the Ha (those wines on permanent 50% off deals in UK supermarkets) are some of the most blai only when you get into the £10+ bracket that you find anything drinkable. The worst part wines in UK supermarkets because the producers aren't big enough to supply the require discount their prices sufficiently to compete with their European counterparts. As a result current oversupply of grapes and the effects of the recession) there are dozens of fantast closure in the next 12 months.

Sadly, that leaves you with the bland crap...



Angel Fine Wines 1 day ago

Aye, cheap Spanish and Italian wines from the less expensive vineyard areas coming to t
wines will start making an upward curve sometime soon.

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