

Champagne and Sparkling Wine

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Sparkling Wine: Bursting the Champagne bubble

Brits have acquired a real taste for a nice glass of fizz. And while once it was only ever about Champagne, MINTEL's latest research shows that these days more and more of us are reaching for a bottle of sparkling wine.

Once considered Champagne's poorer relation, sparkling wines have seen volume sales soar by 44% since 2002 - up by an incredible 13% in the last year alone, with 42 million litres sold in 2007. Meanwhile, Champagne volume sales increased by only 24% over the same five year period, to reach 29 million litres last year.

"Champagne used to be the only accepted choice and sparkling wine was simply seen as a second rate imitation. But sparkling wine growers have now turned the market around by producing consistently good quality wines and giving people a much greater variety of wines to choose from," explains Mathilde Dudouit, senior market analyst at MINTEL.

"For many, sparkling wine is now seen as a really enjoyable treat in its own right, and the fact that it costs only a few pounds more than a regular bottle wine is just an added bonus. People can now afford to see simply meeting friends after work as reason enough to break out the bubbly," she adds.

In value terms, sparkling wine sales reached Â£385 million in 2007, up 27% on 2002 figures. New World wines, including Jacob's Creek, Hardys Crest and Lindauer have proved particularly popular in the UK market because of their strong branding and reputation for quality. They are also the wine of choice for many young professionals, especially when out and about after work.

"Looking to the future, there is real opportunity for sparkling wine producers to also promote their wine as a cocktail ingredient to further boost its image as a glamorous drink amongst the going out crowd," comments Mathilde Dudouit.

England - the new Champagne region?

Once derided, English sparkling wine is now attracting real interest and investment, due to affordable land, good soil, warmer weather and quality production.

And while French authorities are expected to expand the area where Champagne can be produced, Champagne houses Louis Roederer and Duval Leroy have been looking into investment opportunities in English sparkling wine production, while Didier Pierson has already planted vines here.

But according to exclusive consumer research, there is still some way to go before this goes mainstream, as only 3% of us bought English sparkling wine in the last year.