

Nielsen Top 100 Alcoholic Drinks report shows Stella is the nation's favourite

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Findings released today reveal Stella Artois is the nation's favourite choice of tipple. The Top 100 Alcoholic Drinks report, compiled by Nielsen exclusively for Harpers Wine and Spirit Weekly magazine, details the nation's top selling alcoholic drinks brands. The Nielsen Top 100 is unique in that it puts all alcoholic drinks up against each other truly reflecting the performances of the major drinks brands in the off-trade* sector.

The first three positions in the table (which is ranked by total value sales) are taken by beer brands - Stella Artois, Carling and Foster's - but the star performer is cider. As a category cider accounts for 20% of the increased value sales in the last year for total liquor. The strength of the category has allowed for a plethora of niche brands to start making some good volume gains with a definite move towards fruit ciders, especially pear.

Lager dominates the beer sector accounting for 85% of all volume sales - the rest is made up of ales and stout. While the big brands are getting bigger there has been a wider variety of brands available to the consumer in the past year with world beers and speciality beers now having their own shelf space in the big multiple retailers. The last year on a whole has been challenging for the off-trade beer sales with annual volume growth slowing to 1% from 4% previously. The talk of the off-trade benefiting from the impact of the smoking ban in the on-trade** did not materialise not helped by the appalling 2007 summer.

Spirits continues as a significant sector accounting for more than Â£1 in every Â£5 spent and still delivering substantial growth at 5%. Vodka is at the heart of this increase delivering more than half of the spirits categories overall growth. Major brands continue to be vital to the category with the top 20 brands now approaching 50% of total spirits sales over the last year.

The wine market remains as diverse as ever. Thirty seven pence of every pound spent on alcoholic drink goes on wine - another 5p on champagne. The recent surge in RosÃ© takes it up to a record one in 10 bottles and it seems destined to go even further. During 2008 the US will pip France in case sales, New Zealand likewise with Germany on value sales, and Chile, now ahead of Spain, will be closing the gap on South Africa. The 2008 budget will put pressure on the under Â£3 sector which has already slipped below 20% of sales. The over Â£5 (net) wines have gained by 20% per annum and account for one in six bottles while the Â£3-4 price-range captures over 40% of the market.

Jake Shepherd, Marketing Director of Nielsen said "2007 was a tough year for the drinks industry but we can see in this Top 100 ranking, many individual brand performances shining through. Beer and wine remain our collective favourites with 8 of the top 10 ten drinks being either beer or wine. Once again we have seen great growth from major cider brands proving that the increases of sales of cider we started to see coming through a few summers ago were more than just a flash in the pan trend. Many consumers re-introduced themselves to Cider in the summer of 2006 and realised they liked the refreshing qualities this tipple has to offer."

Richard Siddle, Editor of Harpers added "The Top 100 drinks show the British consumer's loyalty to household drinks brands that have been part of our lives for decades. But it also shows how curious and happy we are to try new brands and really get behind genuinely new and different drinks concepts. The strong performance, in particular of cider, specialty and world beers shows how versatile we are. The chart also proves once again how much wine is now the drink of choice in the UK with nearly 40p (37p) in every pound spent on alcoholic drinks brands going on wine - with a further 5p on Champagne and sparkling wines. RosÃ© continues to be a true driving force within the wine sector and with fingers crossed for a hot summer it can only do even better in the year ahead."

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*off-trade - sales sold through outlets licensed for off premise consumption e.g supermarkets, off-licences etc

** on-trade - sales sold through outlets licensed for on premise consumption, e.g pubs, bars, restaurants etc

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